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# MODERN NEPALESE POEMS AND PAINTINGS: CANONS AND CONTEXTS

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## Preview

The main objective of the paper is to explore the commonalities in the artistic experiences of the poets and artists in this country. In this connection some landmarks that are very important from the point of view of introducing the new modes in poetry and art have been chosen. The modern experience is the subject of the study.

Most of the leading painters are mentioned in the paper, but not all the poets who have written well-known poems in the modern period. But those selected here represent the trends and modes in writing. Their craft, and their methods of organizing the experience and projecting the sense of irony demonstrate how they and their contemporaries have written over half a century. Their works are fairly representational from this point of view, but they by no means represent exhaustively the peculiarities and variations that exist in modern Nepalese poems. The main thrust of this paper then is the exploration of the common experience of the poets and artists in Nepal since the fifties.

A response to western influences does not mean an emulation of the styles and modes of painting and writing introduced through education. The modern artists and poets in this country have instead found the western training a useful opening for presenting experiences and expressing and exercising freedom in terms of the choice of the subject and the structure of the discourse, whether that be in the form of language or colours and lines. The modern education has come in handy for the writers and artists for asserting their individualities in relation to the cultural and physical contexts as well. Thus a study of modernism in Nepalese arts and poetry is a study of the trials and tribulations, crises and successes experienced by poets and artists. In short, this paper is a study of the creative response to modernism in Nepal.

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### The Early Context

I allude to a poem and a painting to begin with. The poem was written in the fifties, some years after the democratic change in Nepal in 1950. The painting was executed towards the close of the fifties and exhibited in the early years of the sixties. The poem goes like this:

#### THE PRACTICE OF SCULPTURE (*Shilpa-Śādhana*)<sup>1</sup>

Slowly striking the chisel,  
tap, tap, tap,  
the sculptor steps back from time to time  
to regard the image he carves,  
pleased, grave, discontented by turn.  
On this the fifteenth of Chaitra  
a great procession passes by,  
at Pashupati the Gita sings  
the glory of action's way,  
in every quarter the Pandava roars,  
clamouring for the rights.  
At half-past one the radio gives out  
the programme for the Buddha Jayanti,  
at Anandakuti the sermons run on,  
but still it does not cease:  
the sculptor's tap, tap, tap.  
Though the Pope may send from Rome  
a message of Christmas greetings,  
some Asian lands still bathe in blood:  
it is only on paper pages  
that the Bible goes abroad.  
But Buddha, Jesus, Krishna give  
their blessings to the tapping sound,  
and a statue of Gandhi, smiling down,  
pronounces his "Amen."

(Kedar Man Vyathit. Trans. Michael Hutt)

In a painting entitled "Twilight" (1962) a world of a different nature spreads across the canvas. This is an unusual twilight created by Bangdel. The imagery is drowned into the abstract form. The coloured shapes and the brush strokes give the painting a pattern. The colours themselves, not the images, spring up to the eyes of the viewers and influence the mind. The colours have emotional appeal, but the abstraction of the normal in terms of the use of colour and patterns presents a picture that exists in the experience - an

unusual kind of experience for the Nepalese viewers. There were many others like this "Twilight" in the exhibition in the year 1962 at Saraswoti Sadan, Kathmandu. I am referring to Lain Bangdel's abstract paintings of the early sixties.

The poem of Vyathit presents an artist persona who is aware of the changing world, but who also knows that he has to concentrate on his work, his sculpture. The picture of the times appears, or takes a shape out of the sculptor's chiselling, expressions emerge out of his carvings. The contrast between the wide world - east and west, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, and secularism embodied in the personality of Gandhi become the atmosphere, the canons which determine the artist's work. But he is himself. He knows that sculpting is a craft. The poet knows that this poem is a sculpture and he is a sculptor. Tap, tap, tap is his cosmic impulse. This marks a revolution in the craft, the craft of poetry. The artist's experience of chiselling through the raw material into a shape is written by a poet here. It is a very important creative phenomenon.

The sculptor steps back and examines. He is careful. He has desire. He has involvement and love. The twilight in the painting is a self-conscious work. Different from the *pauwā* or the narrative themes of the Chitrakar's social ethos and the representational portraits, this abstract work presents an art form of a different order. Vyathit's contemporaries Laxmi Prasad Devkota and Bala Krishna Sama had already revolutionized the concept of presenting the twilight of consciousness in the complex forms of poetic structures: They saw

... Poetry's tangible image,  
the speech of the cosmos incarnate,  
beauty and joy I witnessed,  
but what could I do? I could not touch her feet,  
no words of strong love could I find,  
I could not fly, could not dissolve in the Goddess.  
Poetry, Poetry, was it an illusion,  
that sight of your lovely incarnation: If so,  
when came such joy? I could not guess,  
at such joy in the world,  
except the bliss which springs from your touch.<sup>2</sup>

(Bala Kirshna Sama. Trans. Michael Hutt)

The joy emanates from the structure, the lovely 'incarnation' of the poem. A craftsmanship and vision is combined. Sama who was a painter himself, whose representational works, the most well-known is *Jharnā*, show an

utmost care for meticulous details and naturalism. He says of "Poetry and Painting"<sup>3</sup> like this:

When I want a shapeful dream I write poetry,  
And when I want a dreamlike shape I paint;  
When I want you to speak to me I write poetry,  
And when I want you to smile with me I paint;  
When I want to cry for you I write poetry,  
And when I want you to cry for me I paint;  
When I want to touch your heart I write poetry  
And when I want to catch your sight I paint;  
When I want to die for the living I write poetry,  
And when I want a life for the dead I paint;  
So poetry and painting go side by side  
As the very moon and her moonbeam-  
In poetry soul is the painting  
and in the painting soul is the poem,  
And so, my love, my eye is your painting,  
And my heart your poem.

(Translated by Laxmi Prasad Devkota)

Devkota explored the potentialities of language as a medium of presenting experience. He painted lyrics and landscapes with the mythical images and the complex networks of experiences in the background. Colours are abundant in his poems. The range is broad. In the seeming spontaneity and the so called little thoughts for the crafts, his poem takes a shape, a form and a pattern:

A bird flies in the ashen day: it turns to gold  
and sings new songs of the human future,  
unmoving, a tree raises one finger:  
it points to immortal sunbeams  
which have attained their own enlightenment,  
and are flung out now for the world.  
With these rays I weave a net  
of emotion in my heart.<sup>4</sup>

+ + + +

Look at the whorish dance  
of shameless leadership's tasteless tongues,  
watch them break the back of the people's rights,  
When the black lies of sparrow-headed newsprint  
challenge Reason, the hero within me,

with their webs of falsehood,  
 then my cheeks grow red, my friend,  
 as red as glowing charcoal.  
 When voiceless people drink black poison,  
 right before my eyes,  
 and drink it through their ears,  
 thinking that it is nectar,  
 then every hair on my body stands up,  
 Like the Gorgon's serpent hair.<sup>5</sup>

(Trans. Michael Hutt)

There were no parallel experiences for the painter. Chandra Man Maskey was painting narrative themes and making portraits when Sama and Devkota were painting their experiences in poems. The poets were developing a self-reflective attitude already in the fifties. This self-reflection, and a desire to portray oneself in the poems either in the form of the figure or in the form of the emotions recollected in a linguistic structure, was not the Nepalese paintings of that period. As early as 1948 Siddhicharan Shrestha wrote this poem, a self-portrait with a powerful sense of irony in which the poet combines features and linings with the contours of emotions, the anthropomorphic form with the sense of irony, and the self reflection with a sense of parody. To my mind this was probably one of the most unique and powerful poems to appear at that time. The title of the poem is "*Mero Pratibimba*" or "My Reflection" which goes like this:

Looking as though  
 he had lost something,  
 forgotten something  
 who is that coming along the path?

Walking like a dog  
 Buying pain with injernity  
 who is that coming along the path?

Like a rock upon two sticks  
 and a pumpkin over the rock  
 and pulled by children  
 saying that it's a man  
 who is that coming along the path?

Oblivious of Truth  
welcoming only falsehood  
Descending down  
but claiming that I'm ascending  
polluting the air around  
unable to look and see the surroundings  
who is that coming along the path?

A shape without beauty  
A language without feelings  
A man without soul  
thoughts closed on all sides  
that's my own image  
coming along the path.

(My Translation)

The poets had clearly adopted a new technique for presenting a sense of irony and expressing the desire for expansion and self-reflection. But the modern consciousness appeared in art and poetry in a somewhat similar manner in the decades that followed.

### **Nepali Modernism: Modes and Mediums**

Nepali modernism in literature and art is influenced partly by western education and partly, and very importantly, by the changes in the contexts of writing and painting. In literature the western education has exerted the most dominant influence in bringing about changes in the modes of writing and also in the extension of the mediums of writings, as seen in the choice of the genres. Poetry is probably the strongest genre of literary writing. The influence of English language and the study of English literature in the colleges and universities has made the process of getting an exposure to the movements in the western schools of literary writing a possibility. Indian influence has been instrumental in many respects, too. Nepali artists obtained access to Indian colleges and universities, but what they learned at the arts colleges in India was not necessarily the Indian influence. There they also learned the western modes of painting, and the techniques in terms of the use of figures, drawings and colours. Most of the contemporary artists who have introduced modernism in Nepalese arts received their education in Indian arts colleges.<sup>6</sup> Half a dozen artists received education in Paris, London and other western cities after initially getting their formal training in India. Several of them have exhibited their works abroad.

Both in Nepali literature and arts, some features appear to be common in terms of the choice of the medium and the adoption of the canons and the recognition and rejection of the contexts. In both Nepali poetry and arts, the modernism can be noticed in the rejection of the outer space without inner substance. The expressionistic dimension of Nepalese poetry and art is a very remarkable feature of Nepali modernism. In this context it should be mentioned that the Nepali poets and artists showed a tendency to alter the normal contexts of their creation. This was a difficult task, but it was not without rewards and challenges, either. By choosing to alter the contexts and to adopt new canons of writing and paintings, the poets and artists were deliberately, and for good reasons, opting for a crisis that results from the adoption of the radical modern and the rejection of the normally established context. Through the adoption of the new canons and the choice of new contexts the Nepalese poets and artists experienced an interesting dimension of crisis and by the same token the essence of the new mode of creation.<sup>7</sup>

Self-reflection and the recognition of the other medium as a possible model for one's own work, for extending its scope, was another important feature of modernism in Nepalese poetry and art. The writers recognized that there is a commonality of experience in their works and the modern paintings of different schools. As early as the sixties Nepali writers seemed to have begun to recognize that their writing was different from a modern canvas only in terms of its medium, not in terms of organizing the experience and showing concern for the changes in the contexts of creation. Indra Rai wrote:

The relationship between arts (poetry, painting and music), and their confluence is a natural phenomenon. Such a relationship can be explained in three stages. Firstly, the two are present in any one form. Secondly, technical commonalities exist between them. Thirdly, the *āyāmik* (the third dimensionalist) writers make endeavour to incorporate the expressionistic and technical modes of the other forms of arts into their writings. At this stage, the linguistic discourse between the paintings and literature is the most preferable option. We are not contented with the outer form of literature. We are concerned with its inner dimension. We do not simply want a surficial pictorial and melodious commonality. We want the commonality at the levels of paintings and music as art forms.<sup>8</sup>

(My free translation)

Indra Rai specifies a painting by each of the following artists as the model for literary writing by saying, "we want the *āyāmik* literature to be like this." The painters are Manet, Cezanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Matisse,

Duchamp, Picasso, Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Bangdel.<sup>9</sup> The wide range of artists from the naturalists or impressionists, down to the abstractionist modern artists like Paul Klee, that Indra Rai has selected as the model for literary writing, shows the modern Nepali writers' concern with the problem of discovering the metaphor for presenting experiences and the hidden energy of forms. Indra Rai's stories and his colleagues (Bairagi Kanhila and Iswor Ballabh's) poems were supposed to represent the *āyāmik* writing. Though it does not necessarily show all the virtues that Indra Rai may like it to possess as an *āyāmik* poem, the following extract from a poem by Bairagi Kanhila shows the poet's concern for a metaphorical presentation of experience and the use of language for that purpose:

Although I send myself to war  
in inner conflict, mere inner conflict,  
I make Vesuvius and Bali erupt;  
to leaping floods of flame I offer  
the parallel lines of harrowing evil  
from the maps of life  
which cause the fever and giddiness,

the angering dullness of impotence,  
in the eyes of the people filling the market,  
the brown sea of their eyes.  
With a touch of ice they dry up the Nile  
in the palm of the hand,  
they accumulate time in a clod of being.

This ocean of countless cursed eyes,  
I feel impelled to smash it to ripples,  
to set fire to flame with fragments of waves,  
fire and conflagrations!  
To offer up life at life's demand,  
Then once more, to life, to life.

But the guilty are mired in damp shadows  
in this small yard, feet bound by compromise,  
their eyes poured out into footprints,  
their lives emptied out down both sides of New Road,  
empty pots lie still here and there,  
the market of people held tight in their eyes,  
picking a fight, the blows of the Gita,

Arjun's star lit in every eye,  
 halting the sun for an instant,  
 on the canvas reversed, at Kurukshetra, in life.<sup>10</sup>

(Translated by Michael Hutt)

The modern painters too sought like the writers to share the poet's experience by using even the poetic lines - the language in the canvases as a form of collage to articulate that experience. I allude to Uttam Nepali's paintings exhibited at NAFA under the title "Poet, Poetry and Painting" in 1975. The canvases presented a unique configuration of experience in terms of sharing it with the poets. Other poets have used the painting experience and the painters have used the poetic experience in different modes of expression. But the most important modes appear in their treatment of the mediums - the language and the canvas.

Both poems and paintings became abstract and complex after the sixties. Whether that was a direct response to the socio-political changes taking place in the country or not has not yet been studied carefully. But the poets since then treated language not as a vehicle of communication but as a vehicle of the discontinuous sequence of experience. Reality was presented as elusive, and the language was not its medium of becoming manifest but a reality itself. The poet was interested in the character of language as possessing inner potencies. So through the language the poet does not depict but experiences. Here is an extract from Mohan Koirala's poem available in English translation, even though it is not the best example to show the use of language as the vehicle of discontinuous sequence of experience. But this extract shows how the poet weaves his own experience round the experiences structurally embodied in what may be called the language of literature in different cultural contexts of the world:

I remember and write,  
 forget and erase.

An epic play was staged in that theatre  
 where Kalidasa wrote without success;  
 the great music of that stage  
 where Shakespear sang despairing,  
 joyous stories amid a sea of sorrow,  
 the stage where Vedavyasa aimlessly  
 laid the foundation stone,  
 and where a novice now sings  
 with busy, fresh desire,  
 playing the violin of Gandak and Koshi.



Now I am beneath some arena of that future,  
writing, erasing, pondering my board.  
Oh Himalaya, King of Mountains,  
hiding in a fringe of clouds,  
oh frost-singing lands, abode of snow,  
where our emotions and pleas are numbed  
by cold love in the musk deer chase,  
where we have consumed the useless with relish,  
and found the tasteless delicious.

For hours the debate can be heard:  
casting meaning on meaning,  
dividing reason from reason,  
they have pondered the cause.<sup>11</sup>

(Translated by Michael Hutt)

Poems of his contemporaries variously create complex canvases of experience. Language functions as an end in some and as a metaphor of experience in others. Painters too treated their canvases as the search for a new mode of experience and a new metaphor. They made abrasive use of strident colours. Their motifs demanded emotional and intellectual outlets. The prominent green and blue dramatizing the overtly elongated forms of destruction and war in Manuj Babu Mishra's canvases; the elimination of imagery and metaphor in the abstract expressionism of Laxman Shrestha; the dramatization of the predicament of man and woman in today's world through the dismantling or distortion of forms and imageries in an almost surrealistic manner in Sashi Shah's paintings; the extension of the colour and forms and the creation of collage forms to extend the perception of the mind itself in Uttam Nepali and Krishna Manandhar's paintings, the Tantric abstractionism and the use of Hindu sacramental pigmentation in Batsa Gopal Vaidya's paintings, the expressionist use of colours and the mask figures not evoking the ritualistic and the revelatory energy but only as the variations in the colour structuralism in Indra Pradhan's paintings, the anthropomorphic dimension of the interrelated forms in Sashi Kala Tiwari's paintings, all show a new mode of presenting experience in Nepalese arts as in the Nepalese literature of the modern times. The SKIB (Sashi, Krishna, Indra, Batsa) exhibition of 1971 was the first ever meeting of the modern Nepali writers and painters. At this meeting in the NAFA hall, Naxal, poets and artists exchanged their experiences about the conditions of creating in different mediums, and discovered their commonalities.

### The Contemporary Picture

I begin with Kiran Manandhar's paintings. The canvas is *pāhāde kāgat*, a specially designed canvas of the ancient Nepali rice paper. Tendrils, wood and rough linings form the canvas. There is compromise, tension and continuity in the paintings. The anthropomorphic forms appear in most of them. The use of four colours create the drama. There is not so much brush strokes as the placement of colours and forms. But still there is their sweeping movement. The paintings loom out of the *pāhāde kāgat*. Sometimes there appears an intimation of the element of depth. Most importantly, there is a projection of the multiplicity of moods. The rejected materials find a place of prestige. There is the projection of shifting moods, without the concentration of a single experience of estrangement and alienation noticed in the works of the artists discussed above. His earlier works have a great similarity with the modernist painters, from whom he is now departing. Probably he is pioneering a way towards a post-modernistic perception of arts in the Nepalese context.

The younger poets are not shy about presenting the recognizable form of experience. Moods are clearly perceptible. There is an element of subtle parody rather than a complex irony in their poems. A single anthropomorphic form usually dominates the entire canvas or the whole poem. The same voice, the same colours and expressionistic modes of expression move around the canvas and the canvases of the poems are not crowded. The lines are bold and clear. They do not mix too many colours. .... but it speaks in relation to other colours, the moods used in the poem. Let us take some examples:

Why do these strange children  
bear the silence of pain in their eyes?  
Why do their mind's dumb voices cry  
that the wounds on their feet have not healed,  
that their mothers and fathers who left seeking faith  
have not returned from other towns?

These children's lips should bear smiles,  
new buds should bloom in their cheeks,  
why do they try to hide their hands,  
wearing on one side a shower of rain,  
on the other a slap of wind?

Books should be tucked under their arms,  
but now they can go nowhere, they cannot rise

above the town which fills their eyes.  
All they need is a mind  
to be able to see,  
a warm human embrace  
a father's sweet kiss,  
and a breast of mother's milk.<sup>12</sup>

(Ashesh Malla. Trans. Michael Hutt)

The single metaphor spreads across the poem. A poignant yet simple perception gives the poem its strength. The scale of the problem is not vast. But the sense of urgency gives the poem a relevance. The sense of urgency appears to be the dominant theme in many poems in contemporary times. The lines are conspicuous, the concerns are immediate, the awareness is an experience that is present in unmixed fresh colours. The imageries are obvious. Communication is the goal. The living history is the impulse. Language does not represent the disjuncted experience, because there is no need for it to do so. Such is the new mode of painting in contemporary Nepali poems. Some extracta:

We've lost the mother's loving arms  
brother's hands  
sister's blessings  
and in return  
received a red flag  
a settlement dirty like a container  
and our own pawned heads back.  
Our present  
stands at the threshold  
of victory and defeat  
our journey for freedom  
begins here at long last.  
We who are just freed from slavery  
need  
salvation! salvation!!  
salvation again !!!

from these dark  
haughty statues  
standing in our way!  
We need freedom  
from these masters by birth.

We've a country  
 dirty like a container,  
 we should shine it like the moon  
 colour it like a flower  
 nothing's difficult  
 we've the martyrs' blessings  
 but then shouldn't we correct ourselves first?  
 We who are awakened into light  
 after living long in darkness  
 with the perceptions still hazy,  
 aren't we stepping upon the fire  
 unaware?  
 One thing worries me  
 the deceptive *mārichas* are still active  
 So I declare  
 now - at this moment  
 in the name of the martyrs  
 we should alter our own ways  
 we should salvage our own selves!<sup>13</sup>

(Dinesh Adhikari. My translation)

Still more urgent, touristic, ironical is the following extract. It parodies the times we are experiencing in Nepal today:

Respected visitor,  
 this is Kathmandu Valley.  
 Here there are three cities:  
 Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur.  
 Please cover your nose with a handkerchief,  
 no sewage system is possible,  
 the building of toilets has not been feasible.  
 Our next five-year plan has a clean city campaign:  
 could you make a donation?<sup>14</sup>

(Min Bahadur Bista. Trans. Michael Hutt)

The preoccupations of a poet are also parodied in this manner:

... flowers of many colours bloom,  
 bees are buzzing, birds are singing,  
 the sky is clear and spotless,  
 the river flows by swiftly ...

... but pardon me please, oh poet,  
I break the flow of your poem,  
to ask you - are you quite well?<sup>15</sup>

(Bimal Shrestha Niva. Trans Michael Hutt)

Another important feature of the modern Nepalese poetry is the voice of women. The women themselves writing about the predicament of women has given this mode of writing a new strength. The patronizing male voice about the women is being questioned. I quote fully a poem written by a contemporary woman poet. The original poem is written in Newari language.

**So that the troubles may not spill over<sup>16</sup>**

Everyone asks me  
questions.

This one echoes-

why are you like the sky before the downpour today?

I've often said-

pain has no language.

It's something to be felt

in the restlessness

in the sufferings

in the agony of death

borne by the sacrificial fowls,

buffalo, bulls and he-goats.

I pack up my troubles

like mustard seeds

in a bag

that even the kind words

said to me in my troubles

pierce through

spilling all the content

leaving nothing in the bag

and I distribute them

mixing with the tears

with the words

with the sobbings

with the sighs

with the silence

among those whom I regard as mine.

Once again

I become an empty mustard bag

like the sky emptied of the rain  
 clean like the floor freshly shined  
 tight like the belt of cotton cloth  
 and shine up like the face of a mother  
 just returned from the dooryards of death  
 after the bitter-sweet taste of maternity.

Indeed

with the mustard seeds of pain  
 pressed hard within me  
 I fall like the drops of lamp oil  
 on the path of life.

How can the wicks burn without oil?

How can life flow smoothly devoid of experience?

So I fill up my troubles

Like the mustard seeds

in bags

within and without me.

(Pratisara Sayami. My translation from Nepali)

In Ragini Upadhyay's paintings, similarly, the woman herself is presented as the embodiment of irony. Her acceptance of the roles and her own fantasies are her traps. In abstract structures a Nepali woman's mind is projected through the semiotic features and the iconic value of colours, figures and shapes. The exquisite design and the cheerfulness is both a compromise and joy in her paintings. Nevertheless, "the bags of troubles" are indicated through various signalling features. Sashi Kala Tiwari's paintings present the bluish world of relationship. The forms enter into relationship with each other through the tonal design and the coherent structure of imageries. A woman speaks through the male forms creating the most effective irony in her paintings.

## Conclusion

The relationship between painting and literature in Nepal is not a new phenomenon. the narrative structure of the epic poems, the devotional and folk motifs in songs and hymns are also the common feature of the classical Nepali paintings. The canvases open up new vistas. Through the semiotic relationship of forms and the subjectmatters, the viewer very easily transforms the traditional paintings and those done especially by the Chitrakars into language. So the commonality of experience is very easily perceptible in the classical Nepalese paintings and poetry. As discussed in this paper, the modern arts too show the commonality between the poets and

the painters as a real phenomenon. But the contest, the situation, the changing education pattern and the desire to communicate with the wide world have to be considered especially in any discussions about the commonality between the modern Nepalese poems and paintings. The art show in galleries and the untiring efforts of the artists to create an entirely new context for their work have dramatically changed the situation.

The publication of magazines, poetry readings and the wider range of the poet's working pattern have altered the poet's contexts too. They are looking for new canons. They have established some already. Closer ties between the poet and the painters will create new awareness about the creative experience and the relevance of the other medium to the enrichment of each's own art form.

### Notes

1. Kedar man Vyathit. "The Practice of Sculpture," in *Himalayan Voices: An Introduction to Modern Nepali Literature*, trans. and ed. Micahel James Hutt (Berkley Los Angels Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 71-2.
2. Bala Krishna Sama. "From Sight of the Incarnation," in Hutt, 36-37.
3. "Poetry and Painting," *Indreni*, 1(1956), 28.  
Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota has translated his own most well-known poems as well as those of the leading Nepali poets of his times like Lekh Nath Poudyal, Sama, Sidhicharan Shrestha, Bhim Nidhi Tiwari, Bhikshu, Vyathit, Madhav Ghimire and others in this bilingual edition. Two out of the total eight issues of this magazine were bilingual, and Devkota was the translator of the poems. His translation of his own poems presents an interesting study of creative writing in English by Nepali poets.
4. "Prayer on a clear morning in the month of Magh," in Hutt, p. 51-52.
5. "Mad," in Hutt, p. 55.
6. Narayan Bahadur Singh, *Samasamayk Nepali Citrakalako Itihas: A Histroy of Contemporary Nepali Paintings* (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1976), p. 226. Singh presents a list of all the well-known artists' names and their art schools in India, and one in Dacca.
7. Abhi Subedi, "The Structure of Communication in Nepali Poetry and Paintings" (in Nepali), *Kavita*, 37(1992), 5-12.
8. Indra Rai, *Kathastha* (Darjeeling: Shyam Brothers for Nepali Sahitya Parisad, 1972), p. 98.
9. p. 100  
Indra Rai is regarded as the principal architect of the Tesro Ayam movement in Nepali literature. His stress on the quality of literary

writing being closer to a painting had an impact on the works of the poets who worked closely with him. The dismantling and distortion of the familiar linguistic structure in writing, especially in his stories and the poems of his colleagues, have given rise to a question whether literary communication can take place through the breaking of the familiar forms as in modern paintings, or, if it does, how does it project it? Some problems are examined in the paper.

10. "People shopping at a weekly market," in Hutt, p. 106-7.
11. "The Snow Peak's Blood-Red," in Hutt, p. 97.
12. "To the Children," in Hutt, p. 153-54).
13. "Yatrako yo Modma", *Kavita*, 37(1993), 17-18.
14. "Thus a Nation Pretends to Live," in Hutt, p. 157.
15. "Are You Quite Well, Oh Poet?" in Hutt, p. 152.
16. "Dukha Pokhielaki Bhanera" (in Nepali), *Samakālin Sāhitya*, 2(1993), 137-38.

Pratisara is a well-known contemporary Newari poet who has produced a number of collections of her poems so far.



# SOCIOECONOMIC NETWORK OF A TERAI VILLAGE: AN ACCOUNT OF THE RANA THARUS OF URMA-URMI

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## Introduction

The primary objective is to examine the socioeconomic network of a Terai village of the Far-Western region of Nepal. An attempt has been made in the exposition of various socio-cultural institutions prevalent among the Rana Tharus of a Terai village in relation to their socioeconomic network, which has been in existence since long ago. A research question has been formulated to achieve the above mentioned objective.

How have the various socio-cultural institutions such as *Kamaiya*, *Munimji*, *Desi Mahajana* and *Desi Contractors* functioned in the maintenance of the livelihood of the Rana Tharus of Kailali district?

## Brief Review of Tharu Studies

The Tharus are one of the largest groups of people scattered from East to West across the Terai portion of Nepal, including the Uttar Pradesh of India. The Tharus are mostly concentrated in the Mid-Western and Far-Western Terai regions, especially in Kailali, Bardiya, and Dang-Deokhuri. But they remain the least known group of Nepal, as they have always been engaged in agriculture and never went to the Army, to Indian cities, or abroad for employment. Their agricultural life kept them isolated from the outside world in their own localities, though they migrate from one place to another in search of better agricultural farms. A great effort is needed in order to make a detailed and systematic study of the Tharus, as they have not been given much attention by either foreign or native sociologists and anthropologists. A few of the studies on the Tharus have been done by scholars as Dor Bahadur Bista (1967), Dron Pd. Rajaure (1977) and Rishikesab Raj Regmi

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(1978). The first western scholar who gave information on the Tharus is Hamilton (1971). Among the Nepalese anthropologists, Dron P. Rajaure is the first scholar who gave detailed empirical information on the Tharus after his field work in Dang. The doctoral research studies done by Prof. S.K. Srivastava (1958) on the Tharus of Northern province of India and by Prof. Kailash N. Pyakurel (1982) on the Tharus of Chitwan are notable contributions to the literature of sociology/anthropology. But there is lack of literature on the Rana Tharus. The present study owes its authenticity to first-hand knowledge of the Rana Tharus.

### **Ethnographic Account of the Field Area**

The ethnic group selected for the present study is the Rana Tharus living in Urma-Urmi Village of the Kailali district. About the origin of the Tharus, most of anthropologists (Bista, Rajaure, Risley) believe that Thar, the desert land of Rajasthan, India, is their ancestral homeland from where they fled away. They became tharu due to their migration from "Thar". But in regard to the Rana Tharus, as explained by the respondents, the Rajputs were Rana Thakur from a Chhetry group, and when there was Muslim invasion they fled away with their servants. The descendants from these Rajput women and their servants became Rana Tharus. Some of the respondents informed that they were untouchables, so that they had to respect their non-untouchable tharu women. They complained that even a few years back they were not allowed to enter the kitchen, and their wives used to push the plates of food to their husbands with their foot. The village Urma-Urmi is situated in a forest clearing approximately twelve kilometers southeast of the town of Dhangadi. It takes a little over an hour by jeep to reach the village, and the road is only accessible in the dry season, as it has to cross two rivers. The village is surrounded with jungle. Urma and Urmi are geographically united in the sense that they occupy the same forest clearing, so they have been taken here as one unit. This paper is based on the field data collected in Urma-Urmi, of Kailali district during the months April-May 1989.

### **Socioeconomic Network**

The socioeconomic network of the Rana Tharus of Urma-Urmi should be understood in relation to its cultural factors. The major cultural institutions which regulate the economic activities of the Rana Tharus have been given as follows:

#### **Kamaiya**

One of the surprising features of Tharu life is the institution of *Kamaiya*.<sup>1</sup> Since agriculture is mainly based on manual labour in Urma-Urmi, there

must be an equilibrium of labour power and land holding size for an ideal subsistence farming household. A household with a larger landholding size in the absence of sufficient manpower needs to employ some labourers. Similarly, a household with a smaller landholding size or a landless family with many members needs to employ some of their family members as *Kamaiya* somewhere for their living. The case of Bhanu Chaudhary may illustrate the poor socioeconomic condition of a *Kamaiya* as follows:

"Bhanu is living with his wife and five children; two sons and three daughters. He has been working as a *Kamaiya* for three years in the house of Karna Chaudhary, a local political leader. Bhanu has been provided with 60 kg. of rice seed and some land for his subsistence on account of his service to his *Kisan* (master). The land is infertile, and it is very difficult for him to support his children. He requested his *Kisan* to be very kind to his starving children by providing him fertile pieces of land also. But his master did not accept his request. For the last two years, his elder son has also been employed by another *Kisan*, Lok Chaudhary. This made it a little easier to solve his hand-to-mouth problem. The youngest son, 10 years old, has been herding the cattle of *Kisan*, Tana Rana. He provides meals and clothes for his service. His two little daughters look after the younger baby at home. His brother has cleared some forest for cultivation, but it has not been registered."

A *Kamaiya* is generally given a fixed size of land to support his family, a house and a kitchen garden around it, and some lentils and mustard for oil at each harvesting. He does not have to pay interest to the master if he takes loan. But the *Kamaiya* has to give first priority to his master's work according to the annual contract between him and the host family. This cultural institution, as practised among the Tharus, is seen as the predecessor of what today can be called human right abuse, bonded labour or slavery. The *Kamaiyas* have tended to become indebted to their masters and thus unable to escape from the 'host family.' Though they are not sold, debts incurred by the labourer are repaid to the previous master by any new one who may care to take them over. The case of a *Rana Kamaiya* shows how he has been changing his *Kisans* (masters) for his survival:

"Shiva Rana started out as a *Kamaiya* in Chaumala **Village**, where he worked for 11 years owing Rs. 700. This money had been spent on buying clothes and food-grains. A *Kamaiya* need not pay interest on such loans as interest is paid through the work obligations. Then he moved to Bhadra, a Dangaura Tharu Village neighbouring Urma. His new *Kisan* (master) paid Rs. 700. to the former *Kisan*, and he stayed with him for 2 years. He then moved to Belik Village in Urma and his new master paid Rs. 800. He stayed with this master for 4 years, until he moved to Pataribiku near Urma. Here his new master treated him well and during the next 4 years he was able to

pay back Rs. 500, so that he presently only owes Rs. 300. Besides, he has recently been given a paper by the village leader stating that he was landless, so he could hope to be included in a government settlement scheme in the future. Now he owns a few cattle, also. His case is one of the most fortunate ones among the *Kamaiya* in Urma-Urmi, after the change of many Kisans or masters."

Contracts may only be renewed or changed once a year during the first week of January. As mentioned in the field, some families have been working as *Kamaiya* for so many generation that they do not know how it all began and how they got into debt. The traditional contract would generally run for generations, as our law states that sons and daughters automatically must take on the debt responsibilities of their fathers upon their death.

### **Desi Mahajans**

*Desi Mahajans*,<sup>2</sup> another ethnic group from India, are called money-lenders as well as traders. The *Desi Mahajans* have a mutual understanding and relationship with the Tharus. They function as a market credit institution among the Tharus. The *Desi Mahajans* have been dealing in Urma-Urmi since the time of their fore-fathers. They don't live permanently but arrive there for a shorter period twice or thrice a year. They visit in September-October just before Dashain, (a Hindu festival), again in December after paddy harvest, and then after the wheat and mustard harvest in April-May. On their first visit, they bring their merchandise from India, such as cloth, spices, sugar, kerosene, salt and sweets. They provide the villagers with these items, and in return they collect agricultural products such as paddy, wheat, lentils and mustard at harvest time. Barter is the locally preferred system, and little money circulates in the village. A very high interest rate is charged on this credit as the villagers will have to pay twice the price asked at the regular market. Besides, the Tharus take a loan from the *Desi Mahajans* for various purposes such as to buy bullocks and to pay land tax. As noted in the field area, loans are charged a rate of one hundred percent interest in approximately six months. However, they don't take interest from the Tharus. They just purchases the agricultural products at cheap rates and then sell it in Dhangadi bazaar or export it to Indian markets.<sup>3</sup> Due to a lack of education as well as craftiness, the Tharus don't know how they have been exploited by the *Desi Mahajans*.

### **Munimji**

*Munimji*, a liquor store-clerk in Urma-Urmi, represents a very powerful local landlord. The liquor store was established on a central piece of public land in Urma. Liquor would be sold through a dog door (a door too small for a

human being to go through) on the one side of the house so far down that the customer would have to crawl to get his bottle. Such an arrangement is made to keep the cash-box and store safe from outsiders. Men come and drink in the hot spell from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., when the warm and gusty wind makes it intolerable to be out in the sun. This is the time when the *Munimji* makes his best sale of liquor. He charges 25 rupees a bottle for the homemade *raksi* and 50 rupees for the stronger liquor bottle. Surprisingly, a large amount of cash is to be seen at the liquor store, so that the place indeed functions as a rich man's club-house in the village. According to the record of the *Munimji* (1988/89), his monthly sale of liquor averages twenty thousand rupees.<sup>4</sup> Tharu women were found against the liquor-store. Because of the high expenses on liquor, discussions and disputes were common affairs. Consequently, the common topic of conversation among Tharu women was how to separate their husbands from *Munimji*.

### Desi Share-Croppers

The another category of *Desi* share-croppers found in Urma-Urmi are Indians. They have been living in the village for many years. They do not own any land themselves, but cultivate the irrigated lands on a share-cropping basis. As observed in the field, onions, chilli, ladies finger, tomato, and high priced vegetables like cauliflower are grown on a fifty-fifty basis. It is strange why the Rana Tharus don't grow vegetables themselves, indicating either their little knowledge of the production of vegetables or little knowledge of potential profit from their sale in near by markets. Besides, the long contracts may discourage them.

### Conclusion

*Kamaiya*, *Desi Mahajan*, *Munimji*, and *Desi*-share-croppers are socio-cultural institutions among the Rana Tharus of Urma-Urmi which have existed and been effective since their arrival in the area. These institutions have been functional as well as important; in their absence the age-old socioeconomic network might become terminated or broken apart. Thus, these have contributed in the maintenance of the age-old socioeconomic network of Rana Tharus, a particular ethnic group of the Terai village of the Far Western region of Nepal.

### Notes

1. A householder who owns some land is locally called '*Kisan*', which means a peasant, whereas a labourer employed by a *Kisan* to fulfil the work of the household is called '*Kamaiya*'. The separate term known as *Tahaluwa* (service man or servant) is often used for '*Kamaiya*' among

the Rana Tharus. A rich Tharu may have two or three *Kamaiyas* working for him. In Urma-Urmi, 48 *Kamaiyas* were discovered among 127 households. This is the basis for early feudal systems, as practised in Europe and elsewhere, and which one can find today in many neo-feudal forms around the world e.g. as practised in the 'hacienda system' in South America, the 'husman system' of Norway, and the 'torpare system' of Sweden, etc. (Gurung & O. Skar 1989:39).

2. They are Mohhommmed Sarif, Mohommed Ejaj, Mohhommmed Ishak and Mohhommmed Sahid who came from the nearby Indian city, Locknow. In Urmi, the investment of Mohhommmed Sarif this year is Rs. 35,000.00. But he did not like to give the name of indebted Tharus. Another money-lender, Mohhommmed Ishak, gave us the name list of 26 Tharus, and the average loan was Rs. 20,000.00 to each. During the field visit, Mohhommmed Ejaj and Mohhommmed Sahid were out of Urma-Urmi, so no data could be collected from them.
3. As noted in Dhangadi bazaar in April, 1989, the price was Rs. 3.57 per kg. for medium quality paddy and Rs. 3.85 for high quality paddy. But, as informed in the field, on account of the investment, the price of paddy for the *Desi-Mohjans* was Rs. 1.50 per kg. for medium quality and Rs. 2.00 for high quality. The Tharus were found to be similarly cheated in other food items and merchandise.
4. The record of the sale of liquor from *Munimji* is as follows:

| Months (1987/1988)        | Amount (in Rs.) |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| April                     | 19,320.00       |
| May                       | 44,069.00       |
| June                      | 17,256.00       |
| July                      | 13,846.00       |
| August                    | 12,256.00       |
| September                 | 11,090.00       |
| October                   | 15,393.00       |
| November                  | 19,223.00       |
| December                  | 25,237.00       |
| January                   | 24,692.00       |
| February                  | 19,426.00       |
| March                     | 23,665.00       |
| Total:                    | 245,474.00      |
| Per month in average: Rs. | 20,372.00       |

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# CONCEPTS OF MENTAL ILLNESS: AN ETHNOPSYCHIATRIC STUDY OF THE MENTAL HOSPITAL'S IN- AND OUT- PATIENTS IN THE KATHMANDU VALLEY<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

First of all I would like to outline those prior experiences which caused me to work on the concepts of illness prevalent in psychiatric patients in Nepal.

While working in a psychiatric polyclinic in Giessen, Germany, many of my Turkish and Southern European patients told me after a certain treatment period that they had consulted a traditional healer before treatment or even during it (cf. RÖDER, 1987). The healer's recommendations sometimes conflicted with the therapy I had started and in some cases caused the patient to discontinue my therapy. At first I was unable to gain any insight into these culturally-rooted illness concepts that are significant in overcoming psychic decompensations: Turkish patients were often reluctant to criticise the German therapist by confronting him with different ideas on cause and therapy or even to demonstrate their own backwardness. Uncertain resonance and unsuccessful therapeutic efforts compounded the insecurity and annoyance.

The confrontation with traditional concepts of illness entails appreciable difficulties during psychiatric and psychosomatic treatment. It always constitutes a challenge to the therapist's disease model and role perception. Lack of security when dealing with traditional illness concepts is fuelled from many sources. A descriptive consideration of psychic illness on the basis of classical psychiatric nosology (eg. the Heidelberg School) leads to a seemingly sober, distanced attitude. It reflects neither the social power



incorporated by the doctor-patient relationship in each illness theory nor the culture-specific "cognitive patterns"<sup>2</sup>.

Examining mental illness in traditional societies is thus limited- in this view- largely to the quantification of psychiatric phenomena and the influence of culture on the so-called "pathoplastic".

On the other hand, for the therapist who is working on the basis of a psychodynamic illness conception, problems can crop up when he/she has to deal with the magic-projective elements of traditional forms of curing, and also with the patient's very marked wish to be dependent.

I would now like to consider a few more aspects of this field of tension between traditional and scientific concepts of mental illness by outlining some ethnopsychiatric experiences made in a psychiatric clinic in the Kathmandu Valley<sup>3</sup>. I am presenting the first results of a study of mental illness concepts in psychiatric patients and their relatives, commenced in September and October 1989 in the Government Mental Hospital Lagnakhel/Lalitpur.

### **Traditional concepts of mental illness and psychiatric institutions in Nepal**

Nepal's society is characterized by an extraordinary richness in ethnic, religious and linguistic variety (cf. Bista, 1987; Föhre-Haimendorf, 1987). This variety is reflected in a tolerant co-existence and co-operation between differing forms of therapeutic practice (of. Hitchcock, Jones, 1976; Hawran, 1981; Shrestha et. al., 1983; Stone, 1976). In this paper it is only possible to note briefly the traditional treatment concepts of the numerous ethnic groups in Nepal. They are influenced by "great traditions" of the ayurvedic medicine and Tibetan healing practice that tend to eclipse their own "small tradition" of local healing.

In their epidemiological study of a Brahman-Chhetri village in the Kathmandu valley Shrestha et al. (1983) described two traditional concepts of psychic illness that determine the family's and the community's perception and reaction to a large extent: *Bahulapan* (madness) and *Chopuwa* (consciousness disorder). The different attributions of causes are determined by the cultural patterns of interpreting these disorders, and they are crucial in choosing the healing approach (cf. White, 1980).

**Madness baulahapan (*baulahapana*) is accompanied by bizzare behaviour, incomprehensible language and frequent outbursts of violence; as is the case in fits (*chare rog*) indicating a loss of consciousness, they are initially regarded as the consequence of being possessed- either by an attack of personal enemies and witches (*boksi*) or spirits of deceased people (*bhut*).**

The traditional illness models also presuppose a physiological imbalance of the natural physical elements: lunacy is regarded as an excess of heat in the brain, caused by certain foods or types of behaviour likely to provoke illness (e.g., not adhering to the rituals). The ayurvedic treatment methods aim at restoring the balance of the "hot-cold components" of food that had been disturbed in favour of the "cold" foods; the "hot-cold components" being regarded as "elementary qualities" (cf. Hawran, 1981). They are considered effective in the long term illness, less so in acutely occurring disturbances in behaviour and severe physical diseases. In these cases as well, the ayurvedic treatment rules (diet and natural remedies) are also observed, but are often supplemented by medication of the western type.

In their study, Shrestha et. al. 1983 underline the different affinity to the various medical institutions: If they think madness (*Bahulapan*) is the problem, then not only the local ritual healers are consulted but in many cases also medical assistance is sought-provided such is available. If the patient is suffering from fits or unconsciousness (*Chopuwa*), the treatment is often left entirely up to the ritual healer, irrespective of his success. People behaving in a "crazy" manner were diagnosed as being "schizophrenic" or "manic depressive" by Shrestha and his team. In comparison with these two groups it was observed that villages who had been diagnosed as 'having "depression" had been treated by a traditional healer in only an extremely few cases. The bundle of symptoms that were often mentioned, like appetite disorders, sleeplessness and apathy, indicated a high level of somatisation. Most of the people concerned were women whose husbands worked elsewhere, women who had been left or whose marital relations, relations to parents-in-law or neighbours were tense.

In the following section I am going to describe the institutional framework in which psychiatric treatment as per western concepts is carried out in Nepal. In view of the great range of medical-political problems (the infant mortality rate in 1986 was 130 per thousand; the average life expectancy is 47 years) and a catastrophic lack of medical care (in 1988 a doctor has to look after an average of 20,100 people), any psychiatric care within the national health service is accorded only secondary importance in Nepal.

The Government Mental Hospital Lagankhel/Lalitpur, opened in 1984, is thus far the only psychiatric clinic in Nepal. In addition there are three smaller psychiatric departments in general hospitals and the university clinic, and a few psychiatric out-patient units outside Kathmandu. About a hundred people who tend to have chronified psychoses are housed in Dhulikhel, an asylum strongly resembling a prison (cf. Shrestha, 1988).

It is only possible to be admitted for in-patient treatment in the Mental Hospital on condition that at least one relative looks after the patient all the

time during his/her stay in hospital. This family-oriented approach grew out of financial necessity, but it is useful in preventing the isolation that threatens the patient because of institutional mechanisms, and it affords the clinic a more communicative climate.

The patients tend to stay for only a short time: a few days to a few weeks. Many patients are suffering from schizophrenia and manic-depressive illnesses, also the post-epileptic twilight. Drug Addicts are hardly treated at all, although the number of drug abusers has increased appreciably in the past few years. Drug addiction is seen at the moment as one of the greatest social-psychiatric problems in the Kathmandu valley (cf. Bhandari, Sharma, 1988).

Basic questions of professional identity are touched upon in connection with the discussion about a further extension of psychiatric care in the "National Mental Health Planning" and a possible integration of traditional healing methods (cf. Blustain, 1976; Miller, 1979; Shrestha, R.M., 1980; Stone, 1976). These concern the problematic of transferring illness models that developed outside one's traditional culture.

Follow-up examinations of patients treated for psychiatric problems (Shrestha, N.M., 1987) revealed that many of them did not follow treatment through to the end. In view of these communication disturbances in the doctor-patient relationship, the study of illness concepts in patients and their relatives gains special significance.

### Questions and results

The questions asked in the study and the results thus far are now to be presented:

- How does a psychiatric patient's "career" develop in Nepal?
- Which conditions contribute to a decompensation of the family and induce someone to seek help in a psychiatric institution in the traditional Nepalese society?
- Which illness concepts structure the perception of mental disease?
- What is the family members' attitude towards their mentally ill relative?

These questions are going to be discussed on the basis of the interview's results and exemplary case histories.

A semi-structured interview was used to collect the most important social and anamnestic data. In a second step, characterised like a "narrative interview", the relatives were asked questions about their experiences when dealing with the patients and traditional and western medical institutions.

A total of 110 interviews were performed with relatives of out-patients (80) and in-patients (30) of the clinic. 16 in patients attended without any relative. The interviews were carried out in rooms at the clinic and were assisted by an

experienced psychiatric nurse and frequently by an interpreter (2) who did not belong to the clinic. Both interpreters were *Newar*: for this reason the interviews were performed in *Newari* for the *Newar* patients; in all other cases the language was Nepali.

### Social, demographic and anamnestic data

Unlike the male/female distribution in western psychiatric hospitals, there was a preponderance of men among both the outpatients (45 men, 35 women) and the in-patients (17 men, 13 women). Most of the patients in both groups were in the age range of 21-30 years: the mean age of the outpatients being slightly higher at 32.1 years, the in-patients at 29.03 years.

**Table 1: Age of the Patient**

|           |   | Out-Patients |            |   | In-Patients |            |   |
|-----------|---|--------------|------------|---|-------------|------------|---|
| Age       |   | Number       | Percentage |   | Number      | Percentage |   |
| <15       | : | 8            | 10         | % | 0           | 0          | % |
| 15-20     | : | 12           | 15         | % | 6           | 20         | % |
| 21-30     | : | 21           | 26.25      | % | 14          | 46.7       | % |
| 31-40     | : | 15           | 18.75      | % | 5           | 16.7       | % |
| 41-50     | : | 15           | 18.75      | % | 4           | 13.3       | % |
| 51-60     | : | 5            | 6.25       | % | 1           | 3.3        | % |
| >60       | : | 4            | 5          | % | 0           | 0          | % |
| Mean-Age: |   | 32.1         |            |   | 29.03       |            |   |

Most of the patients were *Newar*, *Chetri* and *Bahum*, with only a very few members of other ethnic groups.

**Table 2: Ethnic Group/Caste**

|                                |   | Out-Patients | In-Patients |
|--------------------------------|---|--------------|-------------|
| <i>Newar</i>                   | : | 31           | 5           |
| <i>Chetri</i>                  | : | 24           | 12          |
| <i>Bahum</i>                   | : | 1            | 8           |
| <i>Tamang</i>                  | : | 1            | 3           |
| <i>Gurung</i>                  | : | 1            | 0           |
| <i>Magar</i>                   | : | 1            | 1           |
| <i>Vaishya</i><br>(from India) | : | 1            | 1           |

As expected, most of the patients lived in settlements in the Kathmandu valley. About half of the interviewed in-patients came from districts that were often quite far away.

**Table 3: Locality of the Patient**

| Region               | District         | In-Patients | District        | Out-Patients |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Central<br>Nepal     | Kathmandu        | 5           | Kathmandu       | 41           |
|                      | Lalitpur         | 4           | Lalitpur        | 10           |
|                      | Bhaktapur        | 3           | Bhaktapur       | 3            |
|                      | Nuwakot          | 1           | Nuwakot         | 2            |
|                      | Dhading          | 1           | Dhading         | 2            |
|                      | Kabhre Palanchok | 3           | Kabhre Palancok | 6            |
|                      | Makwanpur        | 1           |                 |              |
|                      | Citawan          | 1           | Citawan         | 2            |
|                      | Sarlahi          | 1           | Mahottari       | 2            |
|                      | Bara             | 1           |                 |              |
|                      | Dhanusa          | 2           |                 |              |
| Eastern<br>Nepal     | Jhapa            | 2           | Okhaldhunga     | 2            |
|                      |                  |             | Sankhuwasabha   | 1            |
|                      |                  |             | Sunsari         | 1            |
| Western<br>Nepal     | Gorkha           | 1           | Gorkha          | 1            |
|                      | Kaski            | 1           | Lamjung         | 1            |
|                      |                  |             | Kaski           | 1            |
|                      |                  |             | Baglung         | 1            |
|                      |                  |             | Tanahu          | 1            |
|                      |                  |             | Syanja          | 1            |
|                      |                  |             | Palpa           | 1            |
| Mid Western<br>Nepal | Salyan           | 1           | Dang Deukhuri   | 1            |
|                      | Rolpa            | 1           |                 |              |
| India                | Bihar (State)    | 1           |                 |              |

Most of the patients were married, but among the out-patients there was a relatively high proportion of single people:

**Table 4: Marital Status of the Patient**

|                    | Out-Patients | In-Patients |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------|
| - Single:          | 30           | 9           |
| - Married:         | 47           | 21          |
| - Widow:           | 0            | 0           |
| - Divorced:        | 0            | 0           |
| - Left by husband: | 0            | 1           |

In random tests it was established that patients without any schooling are under-represented (rate of illiteracy in Nepal in 1985: ca. 75%); on the other hand patients with high-school or university degrees are clearly over-represented (cf. total area of Nepal: High-School degree: 1.2%, college and university degree 0.4%).

**Table 5: Educational Status of the Patient**

|                       | Out-Patients | In-Patients |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|
| - Illiterate          | 25           | 13          |
| - Primary Education   | 22           | 3           |
| - Secondary Education | 13           | 8           |
| - High School         | 6            | 2           |
| - Above High School   | 14           | 4           |

Most of the patients are farmers, but considering the proportion in the whole Nepalese population employed in farming (1981: 91.4%), they are markedly under-represented. Students and employees are over-represented in our sample.

**Table 6: Occupational Status**

(Multiple answers possible)

|               | Out-Patients | In-Patients |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| - Agriculture | 40           | 24          |
| - Business    | 11           | 4           |
| - Student     | 13           | 1           |
| - Scholar     | 4            | 0           |
| - Labourer    | 5            | 4           |
| - Service     | 21           | 0           |
| - Housewife   | 3            | 0           |
| - Others      | 2            | 0           |

On whose advice or recommendation did the patients or their families refer to the hospital?

The decision to seek help in a clinic was mostly prompted by family discussions; in fewer cases health workers or a previously consulted healer made the suggestion. In case of the acutely occurring and often difficult symptoms found in in-patients, the decision was also discussed with neighbours (cf. table 7):

**Table 7: Source of Referral**

|                       | Out-Patients | In-Patients |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|
| - Family Members      | 26           | 13          |
| - Relatives           | 5            | 4           |
| - Health Personnel    | 18           | 4           |
| - Neighbours          | 12           | 13          |
| - Friends             | 7            | 0           |
| - Traditional Healers | 2            | 1           |
| - Others              | 9            | 0           |
| - Self                | 4            | 0           |

What occasioned the families to seek psychiatric help?

In most cases, the first signs of mental disorders were changes in their relative's behaviour which meant that he/she no longer observed his/her duties towards the family: "she only did what she wanted without taking any notice of anyone"; "she cooked meals with only her own ideas in mind and didn't pay attention to the eating rules, didn't look after the family" or: "he didn't do what his father told him any more". This strange behaviour was often aggressive and often observed in connection with alcohol or cannabis abuse. The change of behaviour was attributed to "withdrawal from the family" and "lack of comprehension": "she did nothing but play with her hands and hair" and "he just went on laughing".

At first the family thought it best to "wait and see". Later, however, if the sick relative started to question religious rules and social or political taboos, the attitude towards the patient changed: "she kept calling out sexual words at the top of her voice and wanted to be naked". A Brahman described the first time he noticed odd behaviour in his son: "He wanted to eat everything."

The relatives were also alarmed by serious and lasting disorders in eating and sleeping:

**Table 8: First Symptoms of the Mental Illness Noticed by the Family Members or Others**

|                                                      | Out-Patients | In-Patients |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| - Altered Behaviour                                  | 47           | 27          |
| - Eating Disorder                                    | 23           | 15          |
| - Sleeping Disorder                                  | 37           | 23          |
| - Aggression/Violence                                | 15           | 14          |
| - Anxiety                                            | 9            | 8           |
| - Loss of Drive                                      | 28           | 10          |
| - Excess of Drive                                    | 5            | 1           |
| - Fits                                               | 16           | 2           |
| - Abnormal Talk                                      | 17           | 19          |
| - Did not speak at all                               | 5            | 3           |
| - Not taking physical care                           | 4            | 1           |
| - Suspicious                                         | 3            | 2           |
| - Use of hashish                                     | 2            | 1           |
| - Fever                                              | 2            | 1           |
| - Depressive Feelings                                | 4            | 0           |
| - Confusion                                          | 8            | 0           |
| Physical Complaints                                  | 1            | 0           |
| - Pat. herself/himself came to the opinion to be ill | 1            | 0           |

Although the first indications of illness were noticed by other people in the family due to behavioral changes the patients themselves complained in the main about physical ailments that were socially more acceptable: The language of mental suffering has recourse to that of bodily disease. Perception by the family and perception by the patient differ greatly. 20% of the out-patients and 33% of the in-patients had never complained of disorders or never tried to communicate anything of this kind:

**Table 9: Complaints Mentioned by the Patients**

|                             | Out-Patients | In-Patients |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| - Headache                  | 42           | 11          |
| - Other Pains               | 23           | 12          |
| - Loss of Drive             | 20           | 3           |
| - Loss of Appetite          | 18           | 5           |
| - Anxiety                   | 15           | 2           |
| - Sleeplessness             | 14           | 0           |
| - Moodiness                 | 12           | 3           |
| - Irritation                | 10           | 0           |
| - Menstruation irregularity | 3            | 1           |



|                                                 |   |   |
|-------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| - Epistaxis                                     | 3 | 1 |
| - Constipation                                  | 2 | 0 |
| - Loss of memory                                | 2 | 0 |
| - Fever                                         | 2 | 0 |
| - Diarrhea                                      | 1 | 3 |
| - Skin disease                                  | 1 | 0 |
| - Blindness                                     | 1 | 0 |
| - Pulsation in the heart/<br>Swelling of testes | 1 | 0 |
| - Paralysis                                     | 0 | 1 |

#### The Patient Complained of any Symptoms

|          |    |    |
|----------|----|----|
| - Often  | 28 | 9  |
| - Hardly | 36 | 11 |
| - Never  | 16 | 10 |

How do the other people in the family react to the onset and continuation of the illness?

The onset of the patient's illness was, in half of the cases, described as a "sudden beginning" (out-patients: 40, in-patients: 14); some quoted a "creeping beginning" (out-patients 37, in-patients 16). As the illness often lasted a long time (mean duration in out-patients 5.48 years, in-patients 3.08 years), the relatives were often able to distinguish between different courses of illness:

**Table 10: Course of Illness**

|                           | Out-Patients | In-Patients |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| - Rapidly progressive     | 10           | 5           |
| - Gradually progressive   | 37           | 9           |
| - Several Phases/Episodes | 20           | 16          |
| - Stationary              | 13           | 0           |
| - Improving               | 14           | 0           |
| - Number of Phases:       |              |             |
| 1                         | 0            | 0           |
| 2                         | 4            | 9           |
| 3                         | 6            | 5           |
| 4                         | 2            | 1           |
| >4                        | 8            | 1           |

**Table 11: Duration of Illness**

|                                   | Out-Patients | In-Patients |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| - <1 Week                         | 0            | 0           |
| - 1 week - 1 month                | 1            | 4           |
| - 1 month - 6 months              | 7            | 7           |
| - 6 months - 1 year               | 10           | 3           |
| - 1 year - 2 years                | 20           | 5           |
| - >2 years                        | 42           | 11          |
| Mean Duration of Illness (years): | 5.48         | 3.08        |

What were the reasons that caused the patient to come to the clinic *now*? (or in the case of out-patients without anyone to accompany them: why did you decide to come now?)

It transpired that the communication difficulties that the patient had experienced within the family, accompanied by the incomprehensible, in some cases aggressive or auto-aggressive behaviour, was the prime motive for the family to seek in-patient psychiatric help.

50 of the 80 out-patients were there for follow-up examinations. A large sub-group of out-patients suffered epileptic fits (ca. 20%) that were treated with anti-convulsants:

**Table 12: Reasons Bringing the Patient/Coming himself/herself**  
(Multiple answers possible)

|                         | Out-Patients<br>(n = 80) | In-Patients<br>(n = 30) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Follow up             | 50                       | 0                       |
| - Abnormal Behaviour    | 37                       | 25                      |
| - Sleeping Disorder     | 18                       | 11                      |
| - Fits                  | 15                       | 2                       |
| - Loss of Drive         | 12                       | 4                       |
| - Dangerous to Others   | 10                       | 9                       |
| - Eating Disorder       | 6                        | 8                       |
| - Depressive Feelings   | 6                        | 0                       |
| - Irritation            | 7                        | 0                       |
| - Suspicious            | 6                        | 8                       |
| - Anxiety               | 5                        | 1                       |
| - Pains                 | 4                        | 0                       |
| - Dangerous to Self     | 3                        | 6                       |
| - Drug Addiction        | 2                        | 0                       |
| - Alcoholism            | 2                        | 1                       |
| - Loss of Concentration | 2                        | 0                       |
| - Retardation           | 1                        | 0                       |
| - Nobody to look after  | 0                        | 1                       |

### The family's concepts of illness

The second part of the study focussed on investigating the illness theories prevalent in the families. Which conceptions of illness did the families apply when reacting to the illness of the patient and trying to cope with it?

When asked if there was a situation that triggered the illness, most of the relatives answered in the affirmative:

**Table 13: Precipitating Factors for the Onset of Mental Illness**

|             | Out-Patients<br>(n = 80) | In-Patients<br>(n = 30) |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Present   | 56                       | 20                      |
| - Absent    | 8                        | 5                       |
| - Not known | 16                       | 5                       |

The most common precipitating factor quoted was that there were family conflicts (in each group 10). Marital conflicts, trouble with the parents or parents in law, separation or death of close relatives, neglect, childlessness or miscarriage were mentioned.

Other possible precipitating factors were quoted as financial difficulties (8 of the out-patients) or failure at school or university (out-patients: 5, in-patients: 3). Apart from alcoholism (5) and drug addiction (4), the onset of mental illness is seen in connection with preceding physical illness, brain damage, pregnancy, operations or pharmaco-therapeutic treatment. In isolated cases the relatives (and the out-patients) also quoted work-related stress, loneliness and disorders in bodily development as triggering off mental illness. Considerations about temporal and causal connections before the first signs of illness usually became evident when related to specific points in the development and life-situations of each patient. For example: a very conscientious and reliable Brahman was arrested in a matter that the local community considered quite unjustified. His relatives viewed this arrest as the precipitating factor in his deep depression that was accompanied by a torturous guilt complex. The relatives of an elderly woman thought that the conflict in which she was involved with her daughter-in-law and with neighbours, compounded by her unsuccessful efforts to put a magic spell on her opponents, had triggered off her mental illness.

The importance of culture-specific psychosocial strains was emphasised by the relatives themselves when trying to come to terms with the illness (the interview was carried out with the patient's son). This level of importance can be demonstrated with the following vignette: "The interethnic marriage."

A 51 year-old Chettri woman had suffered chronified depression since her 48th year. She lacked energy and let herself go, withdrew more and more. In the end she only conversed with herself and the gods.

Her husband had left her for a younger woman. Therefore her oldest son didn't feel bound by the marriage rules and married someone from a different ethnic group, a Newar girl. The daughter also left the family. When the joint family breaks up the patient is stigmatised and forfeits every kind of social security.

Most patients do, of course, first seek help from traditional healers. 17 of the out-patients and 6 of the in-patients had also consulted a general practitioner, 24 of the out-patients and 9 of the in-patients had also been treated in a general hospital. About a third of both patient groups had previously had in-patient psychiatric treatment. Another third of the out-patients had been given out-patient treatment for psychiatric illnesses on previous occasions (mostly patients suffering from fits of one kind or another).

**Table 14: Previous Treatment Sought**

|                                 | Out-Patients<br>(n = 80) | In-Patients<br>(n = 30) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Treatment not taken before    | 4                        | 2                       |
| - Medical Treatment (Physician) | 17                       | 6                       |
| - Health Post                   | 2                        | 3                       |
| - Psychiatrist                  | 6                        | 0                       |
| - General Hospital              | 24                       | 9                       |
| - (out-Patients)                | 24                       | 4                       |
| - Mental Hospital               |                          |                         |
| In-Patients                     | 29                       | 7                       |
| - Ayurvedic Medicine            | 5                        | 4                       |
| - Traditional Faith Healers     | 63                       | 18                      |

What was the attitude of the relatives to the sick person? How does a family try to explain the illness?

The answers of most relatives are orientated to two categories. Just like the assessment of possible precipitating factors, the categories are specifically formed according to the individual situation of each patient.

30% of the relatives of out-patients and 20% of the in-patients' relatives thought that "being possessed" was the cause. This illness model was individually elaborated by the families and was also in some cases used to solve social problem:

"We had some trouble with the neighbours about a rice field; they're jealous of us and that's why they've put a spell on him-the patient. After he had been to the healer he got better'. or: "She (the patient) is under a magic spell put on by her boyfriend's family as her parents don't like him."

It is not regarded as contradictory to think that the patient is possessed or under a magic spell and nevertheless to consult a medical-psychiatric institution: "He's possessed but the healer can't help him so he's got to be treated with medicine."

On the other hand, another large group (a quarter of families of out-patients and half the families of in-patients) concluded that something physical was wrong ("from inside", something wrong in the body"). These physical factors were only partly specified (e.g., "puss in his ear", "swelling of tester," "high blood pressure", "hare-lip", "he'd just given blood")

A further appreciable cause of excitation and confusion among patients was rooted in the occurrence of "fever", though no difference was made between psychological or physiological parts (each about 10%). In addition, and in connection with these concepts, psychosocial conflicts in the families and in the patient's environment, financial worries, heredity (e.g., "the father's venereal disease"), stress at work and bad influences (especially alcohol and drug addiction) and incorrect prior treatment were regarded as possible causes (cf. tab. 15):

**Table 15: Conceptions of Mental Illness**  
Expressed by Family Members  
(Multiple answers possible)

|                                           | Out-Patients<br>(n = 80) | In-Patients<br>(n = 30) |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Possession                              | 26                       | 6                       |
| - "Something wrong in the body"           | 20                       | 10                      |
| - Fever                                   | 7                        | 3                       |
| - Family conflicts                        | 5                        | 8                       |
| - Separation of the family                | 4                        | 3                       |
| - Mother-in-law- Daughter-in-law-conflict | 3                        | 0                       |
| - Financial problems                      | 8                        | 2                       |
| - Stress (at school or university)        | 9                        | 4                       |
| - Epilepsy                                | 6                        | 2                       |
| - Heredity                                | 6                        | 2                       |
| - Bad Influence (alcoholism, drug abuse)  | 3                        | 1                       |
| - Head injury                             | 4                        | 1                       |
| - Infertility                             | 1                        | 3                       |

|                                        |    |   |
|----------------------------------------|----|---|
| - Conflicts with neighbours (Jealousy) | 1  | 4 |
| - Conflicts with colleagues            | 1  | 0 |
| - "Saw dead body's face"               | 3  | 0 |
| - Nightfall                            | 2  | 0 |
| - Over-protection                      | 2  | 0 |
| - Alcoholism (drinking habits)         | 3  | 0 |
| - False medical treatment              | 3  | 0 |
| - False treatment by faith healers     | 1  | 0 |
| - Death of family member               | 2  | 0 |
| - Lonesomeness                         | 1  | 1 |
| - Musing                               | 0  | 1 |
| - Climate                              | 1  | 0 |
| - Malnutrition                         | 0  | 1 |
| - No idea                              | 3  | 3 |
| - Different conceptions in one family  | 18 | 1 |

The interviews provided the relatives with sufficient time to talk about the illness among themselves. This revealed a very varied assimilation of differing conceptions and a clear tendency to individualise the suffering. For example, the assumption that the patient was possessed, or the signs of physical disorders did not prevent them from emphasising the significance of conflicting circumstances in the family and social environment. This approach result in more pragmatic attitudes when choosing the therapeutic institution: It must be accessible, the treatment must be within their means (medication is beyond the means of many families, in contrast to the cheaper forms of traditional healing treatment. The latter is often paid for in kind). Consulting a traditional healer, resorting to traditional treatment models and coping strategies in the sense of a re-aculturating - and simultaneous consultation of a medical-psychiatric institution are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the simultaneous or consecutive recourse to different healing types is logically rooted in the complementary character of these therapeutic institutions an example: "The golden water".

Sushil, an 18 year old Chetri comes along with his father. He is said to be a quiet boy. His behaviour has, however, changed completely in the past six weeks. He is unsettled, walks around, leaves his parent's home and goes to India. A few days later he is brought back by his friend after a suicide attempt. Sushil is suspicious, no longer sleeps for fear that something could happen to him. He tells his father that even he cannot avert the danger. In the end he hardly eats anything for fear of being poisoned. Although he did not use to be religious, he now resorts to traditional forms of overcoming fear: He makes sacrifices to the gods very regularly, tried to cleanse himself with

the "golden water" that he pours over three points in strict sequence. In the clinic he is diagnosed as having "Hebephrenia". Sushil's father continues to believe that his son is possessed and attributes his son's changing behaviour to the effect of poison. He has sought help from three traditional healers who all endorse his opinion. Nevertheless, he takes Sushil to hospital as he expects medication to have an immediate effect. He observes his son calming down after administration of medication. Then he concludes that the medication has neutralised the poison. For him, the efficacy of medication proves that his son is possessed. He claims that he will take Sushil to a healer again when he is calmer and less suspicious, as only a healer is able to get to the bottom of the illness and cure it.

The experience made with the various medical institutions contribute to a modification of the patterns of explanation they had originally assumed. For example a man married to a Newar woman explains his wife's illness (she and her children all suffer from epileptic fits) by saying that someone had put a magic spell on her as a child when she had been at the neighbours'. She had sought help from a traditional healer over a period of nine years, but no improvement was forthcoming; in fact she had several fits during this time. Her husband maintained that after the initial attempt had been fruitless and the spell had still not been removed, the illness had penetrated into her brain and done physical damage. As a result of this physical change, his wife's behaviour had also altered at times (after the fits she had been in a post-epileptic twilight for many days which had troubled the family considerably). As the illness had changed its course, he believed that only medicine could now help (one year after anti-epileptic treatment the patient had had no more fits).

Another man whose 46 year-old wife had suffered frequent depression was at a complete loss as to what to do, torn between different explanation patterns: He attributed her shaking movements to magic, she was possessed by an evil spirit (ched). After his wife had withdrawn entirely, refused food and expressed feelings of guilt and a wish to die, he paid more attention to the neighbours' opinion that it must be an illness coming from the inside. Even the traditional healers recommended him to seek hospital advice as the illness was chronic. He had often been advised to leave his wife as they had had no son. Now he had to face great financial difficulties. It seemed that his wavering between the two illness models also showed his ambivalence towards his wife and the tension between his individual wishes and social and economic pressure (e.g., to have sons).

A change in the illness concept during the course of chronic diseases was often observed in the interviews with relatives. Added to this, there was often a generation gap reflected by different opinions within the family-especially

among the out-patients. The in-patients' families' opinions only diverged once. This may be explained by the fact that the seriousness and acuteness of the in-patients' complaints entail much greater inter-family pressure to find one explanation to satisfy them all.

As may be expected, young people with academic degrees tended to account for mental illnesses by considering medical or psychological explanations to a greater extent than their parents or grandparents, who referred to traditional concepts. The frequently differing affinity to the numerous facets of illness concepts within one family can thus be interpreted as an indicator of social change.

One Brahman family constituted an exception to the more homogenous concepts held by relatives of in-patients; in this family the generation gap was illustrated in the different illness concepts. I would like to summarise this case with the motto "Larita's unanswered-rebellious message".

Larita is a pretty 19 year old who grew up in a Bahun family. On the occasion of a memorial service for her grandfather, who had died 6 months earlier, she fainted and had to be taken to the hospital by her brother. Once having regained consciousness, she demanded respect from her family as befitted a goddess; then everything would change for the better. She refused all food and didn't sleep. She rejected the advice of the traditional healer who had said she was possessed and she ran away. Acute psychosis was diagnosed in the clinic, and Larita was given neuroleptic medication, tranquilizers, antiepileptia and finally electric shocks. When I got to know her she was very "clingy" and seemed in a way "broken". What had precipitated this crisis?

It came out that Larita had had a strong desire to be autonomous in puberty and that this had conflicted with her parents' views. Her casual behaviour did not find the approval of her family with their strict moral ideas. At the age of 14 she contracted bronchial asthma. Tensions grew after she had fallen in love with one of her cousins whom she could not marry on account of the marriage regulations. She failed some tests at schools and eventually left her parents and went to live with relatives. Her brothers and sisters regarded her resistance as the main reason for her illness, her parents were however adamant that it was because she was possessed that she was so troublesome and restless.

My encounter with the patient I called "Larita" made me think of the "unanswered-rebelliousness", described by Israel (1983) in the message of hysteria, and of the connection between individual "hysterical" suffering and social power. "Larita's unanswered-rebellious message" portrays the message of the "resisting subject" in this view (cf. Erdheim, 1982). The subject gets into a hopeless crisis within the framework of normative rules and on the



ground of individual psychodynamics and sociodynamics of the family environment. The crisis is then given the label of "acute psychosis with hysterical traits" with the terminology of psychiatry on a descriptive phenomenological level.

As the illness often persisted over a period of years, the family's attitude to the different types of treatment is of special interest. The traditional healer's failure to cure the illness was in some cases explained by his not being in a position to remove the acute excitation.

When asked what else should be done for the patients, the relatives of 77 out-patients and 21 in-patients were in favour of psychiatric treatment or administration of medication being continued. Traditional healers were advocated by families of 9 out-patients and 3 in-patients. Families of 7 out-patients and 3 in-patients maintained that work would help to cure the illness; four families (out-patients) believed that marriage would help. In individual cases, it was suggested that family conflicts should be settled, addictions should be given up, an operation, family worries or change of environment might be significant prognostically speaking.

77 of 80 out-patient families and 28 of 30 in-patient families were prepared to continue their support of the sick relative. Three out-patients had no family support whatsoever in the Kathmandu valley. One in-patient was looked after by a neighbour, one family had decided that if in-patient treatment brought about no improvement they would no longer accept the sick person in their family but would put him in prison.

When asked about the efficacy of psychiatric treatment, most of the families responded by mentioning the calming effect of medication (26 out-patients, 12 in-patients), soporific and behaviour-controlling functions of the medication (27/9) and changes within the body (6/2) caused by medication. In some cases, they mentioned effects like improvement of appetite, boosting spirits, giving more drive and anti-epileptic effects. Only 3 out-patient families and 2 in-patient families thought that medication was useless. 12/10 families had no idea if the treatment was effective or not.

As is revealed by the complaints mentioned above, the psychopathology of the treated patients was grave. Most of the in-patients were suffering from schizophrenia or manic-depressive psychoses. Tab. 16 gives an impression of the psychiatric diagnoses made in the clinic.

**Table 16: Psychiatric Diagnoses  
(Partly Overlapping of Diagnostic Categories)**

|                              | Out-Patients<br>(n = 80) | In-Patients<br>(n = 30) |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Neurosis                   | 14                       | 0                       |
| - Psychotic Episode          | 5                        | 3                       |
| - Schizophrenia              | 20                       | 12                      |
| - Schizo-affective Psychosis | 1                        | 0                       |
| - Manic-depressive Psychosis | 20                       | 13                      |
| - Depression (unipolar)      | 13                       | 3                       |
| - Mania (unipolar)           | 3                        | 6                       |
| - Alcoholism                 | 4                        | 1                       |
| - Drug Abuse                 | 2                        | 0                       |
| - Organic Psychosis          | 2                        | 1                       |
| - Epilepsy                   | 12                       | 1                       |
| - Intellectual Retardation   | 3                        | 0                       |
| - Diagnosis not clear        | 1                        | 0                       |

## Discussion

An attempt was made to investigate models developed by families of psychiatric patients to explain mental illness. To this end, interviews were conducted with these relatives of patients in a clinic in the Kathmandu valley. A total of 110 interviews were made (80 out-patients, 30 in-patients). Nearly all the patients had been treated for a long time by a traditional healer (*jhākri* or tantric healer or by means of ayurvedic methods) before beginning out-patient psychiatric treatment. In most cases, the relatives had only tried contacting medical-psychiatric institutions when the families' own compensatory mechanisms to overcome the illness had been exhausted, they had no longer been able to withstand the strain and confrontation with the patients' fears, and after diverse healing attempts had failed.

The patients were only admitted for in-patient treatment if they showed serious dissociative conditions. The psychic background of somatic complaints, especially in the case of depression, had often been overlooked - even over a period of years - by the general practitioners consulted thus far.

The therapeutic offer of the psychiatric clinic was identified as a part of "western hospital medicine" by the families, "something which wants to precipitate changes in our bodies", as one relative stated. Essential fields of application were acute excitation and fear and serious physical or vegetative symptoms (e.g., disorders in sleeping and eating).

The relatives' definition of mental illness emphasised the sudden; seemingly inexplicable negative changes in habit and behaviour shown by the patient. These changes were often associated with withdrawal from duties and responsibilities. Thus they made a gradual differentiation between being confused (*dimak bigreko*) and being mad (*baulaha*).

On account of the selective combination of the interviewed families taken from the whole clientele of the clinic, it is not possible to generalise. Evaluating the results only allows us to establish trends. The present study confirms to a large extent what was stated in a comparative study (of Skultans, 1988) between patients of the psychiatric clinic and those who had consulted a healer in the Kathmandu valley who had specialised in mental illness:

- 1) The sex distribution showed a clear preponderance of men. In my opinion, this can be explained by the fact that in patriarchally organised families men have easier access to treatment possibilities considered good or necessary.
- 2) Both in and out-patients had relatives who were strongly involved. Skultans assertion that patients in psychiatric care were not given much support and help by their families was based on the small number of persons accompanying them. His opinion cannot be endorsed by us.
- 3) Resorting to traditional patterns of explanation (possession) makes it possible for the family to assume collective responsibility for the illness, to stabilise the inter-family relations and to relieve the individual.

The traditional concepts were often used more like an outline that was often individually filled in and adjusted to the conditions of each psychosocial environment. Thus multi-faceted connections were the result whose accents might be placed on projective-relieving explanations, or the explanations emphasising the conflicting aspects of the patient or the imbalance of physical factors.

The variety and wealth of nuances found in interpretation patterns reminds one of the "oscillation between different interpretation patterns" described by Pfleiderer (1982) as characteristic for societies in transition. Even if the younger relatives with a good education tended to see the illness as a consequence of a physical defect or psychosocial conflicts (the variable "education" and "locality in cities of the Kathmandu valley"), this by no means ruled out the application of a traditional understanding of illness or prevented them from emphasising the significance of treatment as practised by traditional healers.

Overcoming mental illness and the fear and worry it causes in the family is managed in the main with the help of the traditional "sense-giving" healing

methods. Traditional illness concepts guarantee rather the continuity of co-existence in the community: they make mechanisms to overcome illness available - like healing rituals. Fear-precipitating Id-impulses, feelings of shame and guilt are taken up by the group in which the suffering individual remains integrated.

The limits to this integration are, however, found where the deviating behaviour is regarded as anti-social, defined as doubting the essential institutions and taboos. This is then given a negative response - in some cases by excluding the individual from the group. The integration performance of traditional healing instances often described in anthropological and ethnopsychiatric literature (cf. Hitchcock, Jones, 1976; Oppitz, 1982; Waxler, 1977) proved to be limited, especially in the case of illnesses that provoked behavioural alterations.

Some of the families resident in the Kathmandu valley found the explanations and measures offered by traditional healers inadequate (e.g., after years of treatment to cure fits that never had any success). In these cases, the traditional therapeutic potential was obviously limited, but another reason for the families to turn their backs on traditional methods might be that the healers in the Kathmandu valley changed their style of treatment. Skultans (1988) has already described this increasingly limited and mechanical approach to the patient. It was said that the city healers did not have the specific social and psychological background knowledge that the rural healers had at their fingertips. The therapeutic practice of a city healer was said to resemble that of a medical and psychiatric institution, as far as speed and impersonal ambience were concerned.

The individual concepts held by the families were hardly considered at all in the psychiatric clinic's therapeutic approach. The clinics treated by administering psychopharmaca and - in case of serious stupor - an electro-convulsive therapy was applied as a supplement.

If we pick up Skultans observations, i.e., that a tendency is developing for traditional culture's repertoire to be modified towards a more mechanistic healing practice, and if we reconsider the de-communicating model of descriptive psychiatry, then this might give an explanation for these comparable developments: a change in the defence constellation of the social institution "healing instance". Mentzos (1988) showed that institutions are predestined to take over psychosocial defence tasks as well: institutions serve neurotic psychosocial defence. By means of "institutionally rooted patterns of behaviour and relationships" (Mentzos, 1988:) regressive drive needs are satisfied and defence behaviour is secured against unreal, phantasised, not unfounded fears, depressions, feelings of shame and guilt.

It can be assumed that the noticeable social and cultural changes prevailing in Nepal's transitional society go together with changes or the decline of institutionalised defence systems (e.g., in religion or in the strictly patriarchially structured families). Within this process a uniforming of therapeutic practice is noticeable. As a result of these **developments**, the **fear** potential is heightened, and this is encountered on an individual and family level in some cases by resorting to "proven" mechanisms to defend and overcome.

To improve communication ability - to the interior as well as to the exterior - presents itself as an essential therapeutic challenge. To overcome it is, in my opinion, bound to "translation work" that respects the culturally rooted pattern of interpretation. In this process the therapist's sensitivity towards the individual modifications in culturally prescribed explanations of meaning is heightened.

### Notes

1. This is an extended version of a lecture held at the "International Symposium on Cultural Psychiatry", August 26-28, 1991.
2. HELLER (1977:47) defines the "culture-specific cognitive schemes" that encompass the causality relationship between systems and their causes, between exterior and interior according to the patterns of explanation rooted in language and culture: "these schemes are formed in such a way that the sensual experience keeps confirming to the ill person the truth of his conceptions in the form of evidence experiences".
3. At this juncture I would like to thank the director of the clinic, Dr. D.M. Shrestha, and Dr. N.M. Shrestha for the work possibilities that they generously placed at my disposal and for the many stimulating discussions we had together. The study would not have been possible without the sensitive interview guidance of an experienced psychiatric nurse, Mrs Sarasvati Shrestha, and the helpful elaborations on sociological connections and mythological background presented by Mr Bishnu P. Shrestha. May I give them both a special thank you.

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# THE BADI: PROSTITUTION AS A SOCIAL NORM AMONG AN UNTOUCHABLE CASTE OF WEST NEPAL.

Thomas Cox

## Introduction

The Badi belong to an untouchable Hindu caste, with a total population of approximately 7,000, who inhabit scattered settlements in the Salyan, Rolpa, Rukum, Dailekh, Seti, Jajarkot, Dang-Deukhuri, Banke and Bardiya Districts of west Nepal. Badi men fish (keeping most of the catch for their own family's consumption) and make drums and pipes, which they sell to Nepalese in neighboring communities. Badi women engage in prostitution beginning at puberty and continuing until they become too old to attract any more customers or get married. This article focuses on Badi prostitution, its practice, and its social, economic, historical and cultural dimensions. The conclusions presented here are based on in-depth interviews conducted with over forty Badi men and women, in the Districts of Bardiya, Banke and Dang-Deukhuri, between May, 1990 and May, 1992.

## A Short History of Badi Prostitution

The Badi originally came to west Nepal from India back in the fourteenth century, first settling in Salyan, and later in Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot. From the time of their settlement in Nepal, until the 1950's, the Badi made their living as entertainers, travelling in groups consisting of three or more families from one community to the next, staging song and dance performances and telling stories, from the great Hindu epics of the *Mahabharat* and the *Ramayana*.<sup>1</sup> The Badi's travels often took them out of their home Districts as far east as Palpa, Baglung, Pokhara, Gorkha and Bandipur (see also Gurung 1982).<sup>2</sup>

Until the 1950's, the Badi were supported primarily by rulers of three principalities- Jajarkot, Salyan and Musikot<sup>3</sup> and to a lesser extent by some wealthy high caste landlords (see Regmi 1978 for a good description of the



rulers and landlords who lived in west Nepal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). These patrons provided the Badi with basic needs; housing, land, clothing and food. In return the Badi provided them with entertainment and sex. At this time, however, Badi women limited their prostitution to patrons and some of their male relatives.

After the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950 and the subsequent establishment of king Mahendra's *Panchayat* government, rulers and landlords in west Nepal were stripped of much of their previous authority, and they lost the right to tax subjects and exact unpaid labor and rent (on agricultural land) from them. As a result, they lost much of their economic clout and were unable to continue their patronage of Badi.

Badi women, in an effort to make up their lost income, began prostituting themselves with increasing numbers of men. This growing reliance on prostitution was encouraged in the mid- 1960's by new accessibility (facilitated by a malaria eradication program) to Tulsipur, Ghorahi, Rajapur, Nepalgunj and other growing, populous *terai* (plains) towns with large, expanding markets for prostitutes. At the same time that the market for prostitutes was expanding, demand for singing and dancing was shrinking (as a result of the radios, movies and tape players which became increasingly available throughout the 1960's and 1970's), making the Badi even more dependent on prostitution as a source of income.

### **The Socialization and Day-to-Day Practice of Badi Prostitution**

Badi girls, from early childhood on, know and generally accept that a life of prostitution awaits them. Their parents and other Badi tell them that prostitution is and always has been the work of women in the Badi caste, and that to aspire to any other profession would be unrealistic. Badi girls see all the young women around them including their own mothers and sisters, engage in prostitution on a daily basis. Indeed, they virtually never see any Badi women engaging in any profession but prostitution. Badi girls also usually do not go to school, they have little contact with outsiders, and they thus are not exposed to many ideas, values or beliefs that counter those in their own society. Girls also learn early on that prostitution is the only means of support available to most Badi families.

As Badi girls grow up, they learn from their mothers, sexually mature sisters and other Badi women all about sex and how to dress and act in such a way as to attract men. Within a few months after reaching menarche (at an average age of thirteen), Badi girls begin to engage in prostitution themselves. Some girls start on their own, but most are prompted to begin by their parents.

A Badi girl's first episode of sexual intercourse is accompanied by a ceremony known as *nathiya kholne*. During *nathiya kholne*, the man gives the Badi girl new clothes, jewelry (which usually includes an earring that is worn on the nose) and a sum of money, which ranges between 1,000 and 5,000 rupees. Then the girl rubs a streak of vermillion powder (known as *sindur*) onto the man's head, and he does the same to her (see also Gurung 1982:7). Then the man and Badi girl go off by themselves and he deflowers her.

The *nathiya kholne* ceremony is similar to Nepalese Hindu weddings, where the groom bestows clothes and jewelry on the bride and exchanges *sindur* with her, prior to consummating the marriage. And in traditional Nepalese Hindu marriages, as in *nathiya kholne*, the girl is supposed to be a virgin (see Bennett 1982 for a comprehensive discussion of Hindu weddings in Nepal). The major difference between *nathiya kholne* and a Hindu marriage ceremony is that the latter is meant to mark the beginning of a lifelong relationship, while in the former the couple usually separates after having sexual intercourse, with the Badi girl going on to a career of prostitution with other men.

Mothers play a major role in initiating their daughters into prostitution. In the beginning, mothers often offer the services of their own daughters to prospective clients and personally handle the bargaining. After a few months the girl usually feels confident enough to approach clients and bargain on her own. Even at this stage, Badi prostitution is still a "family affair," with girls continuing to prostitute themselves in their parent's home. When a client arrives, he will sometimes sit and talk with the Badi girl and her parents over a glass of *rakshi* (homemade liquor). After a while he will then take the girl to some other room in the house and have sex with her.

Since Badi prostitutes work openly and congregate in specific wards, they are easily found. Some men stay with a Badi girl for only an hour or so, while others remain with her for up to three days.

Men from all walks of life come to Badi prostitutes as clients. They include engineers, truck drivers, teachers, policemen, farmers, students, contractors, agricultural technicians, shopkeepers and hotel owners. They may be local residents or come from India or Kathmandu.<sup>6</sup>

Badi girls from Bardiya, Dang, Seti, Salyan, Dailekh, Rolpa and Rukum often go to Nepalgunj for several months out of the year to find work. While working here some girls rent rooms, while others stay with relatives or in their own second houses (which they usually rent out while not around).<sup>7</sup> Badi prostitutes are often accompanied on these trips by their parents, who cook, clean and do all the domestic chores to give their daughters the most time possible for prostitution.

### **The Economics of Prostitution**

Badi girls usually charge their clients between 30 and 60 rupees for a single session of intercourse, and between 250 and 300 rupees for the whole night. They make anywhere between 3,000 to 7,000 rupees a month.

Badi girls retain control over most of their earnings from prostitution. When Badi parents (or other family members) need to buy food, clothing or anything else, they ask their prostitute daughters for money. But they rarely ask for all their earnings. Badi parents told me they were afraid to ask daughters for all their income, as they might become dissatisfied and run away.

Income from prostitution is the Badi's primary source of support.<sup>8</sup> The money which Badi men make from selling drums or pipes is negligible. For this reason Badi prefer to have daughters and not sons. Some of my informants even told me about Badi women who had cried with disappointment after giving birth to a son.

Badi parents, in an effort to maintain their income from prostitution, often try to prevent their daughters from getting married. As a result, many Badi women who want to get married are forced to elope. In other cases, Badi parents will let their daughters marry, but only after the man has agreed to compensate them for their lost income. If Badi parents have three or more prostitute daughters, they will sometimes allow one to marry, if income from the remaining girls is sufficient. In still other cases, Badi parents with land or other resources are not so dependent on their daughter's income, and thus they will let them marry.

The following case study shows how the members of one Badi family have had their lives shaped by various economic forces.

Janak, the son of a Badi prostitute, shova, and a high-caste (Chetri) Nepalese man named Durga, was born and raised in Salyan. Durga had come to Shova as a client and visited her regularly for almost a year before leaving for good. When Janak was only 16, he married Sita, a Badi girl (who was not a prostitute) from Musikot (Musikot has the only Badi community where the women do not engage in prostitution. This is because Badi of Musikot have developed alternative means of generating income. Most Musikot Badi families have a substantial amount of land, on which they grow a variety of crops. They also raise and sell horses, and the men usually work for part of the year at wage labor jobs in India). After Janak and Sita got married, they went to India, where Janak worked as a laborer on road construction crews. While in India, Janak and Sita had a daughter and three sons. After 12 years in India Janak and Sita finally decided to move back to Nepal. By this time their daughter was almost old enough to begin work as a prostitute and Janak and Sita knew that she could make a substantial income much more than the

20 rupees a day Janak had made in India. Janak and Sita decided to move to Tulsipur, because land was still fairly cheap there, and they know that the town had a good market for prostitutes. When they first moved to Tulsipur, Janak rented a house for his family, and opened a small store (selling spices, tea, soap and food) with money he had saved from India. The shop folded due to a lack of business, but Janak's daughter earned 5,000 rupees a month at prostitution and within two years Janak had enough money to buy land and build a house. The land cost 20,000 rupees and the house cost 25,000 to build. Janak built his house right on the main road leading into the Tulsipur bazaar, as that was the place frequented by the greatest number of potential customers for his daughter. Janak said that he lets his daughter control most of her earnings from prostitution. He does not want to ask for too much money, for fear that she would get upset and elope with one of her clients, thus cutting off Janak's only source of income.

### **The Badi Argot**

The Badi have an argot, which they use to talk about prostitution in the presence of outsiders without being understood (see appendix one). A Badi girl will often use the argot to confer with her parents or others about whether to sleep with a particular man or what she should charge him. The Badi also use their argot to talk about prostitution in buses, bazaars, shops, offices and other areas where there are people who might be able to overhear what they are talking about.

### **Relations Between Badi Women and Men From Other Castes**

#### **Relations with High Caste Men**

The Badi are the lowest ranking untouchable caste in the districts where they live. It is primarily because of their prostitution that Badi have so little status. Members of Nepal's highest (twice-born) castes (which include Brahmans, Chetris and Thakuris), in accordance with the rules of orthodox Hinduism, are not supposed to allow Badi into their homes or accept a meal of cooked rice or a glass of water from them. Marriage with a Badi is also strictly forbidden. A Brahman, Chetri or Thakuri (either a man or woman) who marries a Badi, stands to be disowned by their family and ostracized by other members of their caste.

Despite the restrictions of orthodox Hinduism, many high caste Nepalese men have sex with Badi prostitutes. Most of the time, relations between a Badi woman and her high caste client will begin and end with the sex act. I have, however, encountered many cases of high caste men who ended up marrying, or otherwise developing long-term, live-in relationships with Badi prostitutes. In the majority of these cases, the man ended up leaving his Badi

wife (or lover), because of opposition from his parents. I did, however, collect some cases of marriages between Badi women and high caste men that have lasted. I saw still other instances where a high caste man had a Badi woman with whom he had been having social and sexual relations with on a regular basis for several years. In other cases that I was familiar with, a Badi woman was living (without being formally married) with a high caste man, but had doubts as to whether the relationship would last, because of opposition from the man's parents (and/or other problems). what follows are case studies which illustrate the four kinds of relationships between high caste men and Badi women outlines above.

**Susila, Age 22. Home: Rajapur (a hamlet just outside Tulsipur)**

When Susila was 13 (and had only been working as a prostitute for a couple months) she became involved with Mohan, a Chetri engineer who was working and living in Tulsipur. Mohan first came to Susila as a client, and he soon began visiting her regularly. After a few months, he proposed marriage, and Susila accepted. Susila's parents, however, objected to the marriage, as they did not want to lose the income from her prostitution. Susila and Mohan eventually eloped, marrying in a private ceremony at a local temple and subsequently moving into Mohan's rented house. Mohan and Susila lived together in Tulsipur for five years, and they had two sons, Shyam and Durga. At the end of this time, Mohan's project (which involved putting in drinking water systems) came to an end. But Mohan's plans to return home to Janakpur were ruined when his parents refused to accept Susila or Shyam and Durga. Mohan, after remaining in Tulsipur for two more months, eventually abandoned Susila and his two sons, and returned to Janakpur alone. After Mohan left, Susila took Shyam and Durga, moved back into her parent's home and began her prostitution again.

**Shanti, Age 21. Home: Rajapur**

Shanti at fourteen, had been prostituting herself for five months, when she met Sanjiv, an Indian Chetri man who was working as a mechanic in Tulsipur. Sanjiv came to Shanti as a client, and soon he began seeing her on a regular basis. After they had known each other for about six weeks, Sanjiv and Shanti began living together in his rented house. In moving in with Sanjiv, Shanti initially faced considerable opposition from her parents, who knew that if Shanti got married it would stop her prostitution and, thus, cut off their income. The opposition from Shanti's parents was eventually defused when Sanjiv began giving them money on a regular basis. Shanti and Sanjiv have been living together, without getting married, for six years. During that period of time Shanti has had three children (two sons and a

daughter) by Sanjiv. Sanjiv wants to move back to his home in India, but is sure that his parents would never accept Shanti or his children. Sanjiv's parents (not knowing about his relationship with Shanti) keep sending him letters saying that he should come back to India and marry a girl of their choice. Shanti is very concerned that in the end Sanjiv will succumb to his parent's wishes and abandon her.

**Pravina, Age 29. Home: Bungusri**

Sunil (a Chetri) came to Pravina as a client when she was 15, when she had been prostituting herself for a little over a year. After seeing each other for about three months, Sunil and Pravina decided to get married. After the marriage Sunil resigned from his job (with the police force in Nepalgunj) and moved into Pravina's home in the village of Bungusri. Sunil and Pravina have now been married for fourteen years, and have three sons, age 13, 11 and 8. They make their living from farming Pravina's land, and both expressed satisfaction with their marriage, Claiming that they had no serious problems. Sunil did not have to worry about parental opposition to his marriage, because his father and mother had both died long before he met Pravina. Sunil's two brothers and other relatives are upset about his marriage. But Sunil was not that close to them to begin with, and he is not concerned about what they think. Sunil claims to have been completely accepted by the other Badi, Tharu<sup>10</sup> and Muslim villagers in Bungusri, and he has no desire to go anywhere else.

**Jamuna, Age; 25. Home: Bagar (a village in the Dang Valley)**

Jamuna was 21, and had been prostituting herself for about eight years, when she first met Prakash, who came to her as a client. Prakash Budhatoki is a 26 year old Chetri man who manages his family farm in the Dang Valley and lives with his mother and sister. In the four years since their initial meeting, Jamuna and Prakash have been seeing each other, on average, several times a week. They have also taken several extended trips together to Kathmandu, India, Pokhara and other places. During this period, Jamuna has not prostituted herself with any other men, as she receives enough money from Prakash for herself and her parents. Prakash really wants to marry Jamuna, but says he probably never will, as he knows the union would never be accepted by his mother.<sup>11</sup> While Jamuna is disappointed that Prakash will not marry her, she has continued to see him. Jamuna does not have any children, and she takes regular depo provero injections to prevent conception by Prakash.

### **An Analysis of the Case Studies of Relationships Between Badi Women and High Caste Men**

During my research, I collected a total of three case studies of Badi women who (as in Susila's case) had either married or (in the other two cases) lived with a high caste man for several years and had children by him, only to be abandoned as a result of opposition from his parents. I collected another two case studies (and this includes Shanti) of Badi women who were currently living with a high caste man, but doubted whether the relationship could last in the face of opposition from his parents. I collected another three case studies of Badi women (including Jamuna) who had high caste lovers who they saw on a regular basis, and who wanted to marry them, but would not as a result of parental opposition. I collected a total of two case studies (of which Pravina is one) of Badi women who had seemingly "successful," stable marriages with high caste men. Significantly, in both of these cases, the man did not have any parents. It was precisely this lack of parental opposition that enabled the marriages to work. In all the other cases, it was disapproval from the man's parents that ended, or threatened to end, the marital (or long-term, live-in) relationships. The presence, or lack thereof, of a high caste man's parents seems to be the crucial factor which determines whether or not he will be able to successfully marry a Badi woman.

### **Relations with Low Caste Men**

During my research, I also collected two case studies of marriages between Badi women and *Kami* (an untouchable blacksmith caste) men, and another of a marriage between a Badi woman and a Tharu man. The Kami men and their Badi wives have been married for eight and eleven years respectively. The Tharu man has been married to his Badi wife for seven years. None of these marriages were opposed by the men's parents.

There are two major reasons why Kami and Tharu seem to be more willing, than Brahmans, Thakuris or Chetris, to allow their sons marry Badi women. (1) Tharu and Kami are closer in caste status to Badi than Brahmans, Thakuris or Chetris are. (2) There is a certain sense of unity and solidarity between Kami, Tharu and Badi, deriving from their common oppression at the hands of high caste Nepalese.

The following case study describes the household (mentioned above) of a Tharu man, Mahesh, and Urmila, his Badi wife.

Urmila was born and raised in the village of Bagar (in the Dang Valley). When she was 20, Urmila moved with her parents to the village of Bungusri in Bardiya district. Urmila worked as a prostitute until she was 26, at which time she began living with a Chetri school teacher. After four years (without having any children) they separated, and Urmila subsequently began to engage

in prostitution again. But after three years she married Mahesh Chaudhary, a Bungusri Tharu man eight years her junior. After their marriage, Mahesh moved into Urmila's house (which she had built on two acres of land). They say that their marriage had been accepted by Mahesh's parents, as well as by Bungusri's other Tharu, Badi and Muslim residents. Mahesh and Urmila grow wheat, corn and potatoes on their land and work as laborers on local construction crews and at a nearby tile factory. They have two children, a son of five and a daughter of three. Urmila speaks fluent Tharu, and her children are growing up bilingually in both Tharu and Nepali. Urmila also says that she follows many Tharu beliefs, values and customs and expects that her children will do the same.

## **Badi Family Structure, Marriage Patterns and Social Organization**

### **Family Structure and Marriage Patterns**

Badi women generally do not use birth control, and thus they commonly have children by their clients.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, out of a sample of sixteen women who had been working as prostitutes for 4 years or longer, fourteen had given birth to children by their clients. Of these, four women had one child each, six had two children apiece and four had three children each.<sup>13</sup> Out of these fourteen women three eventually married, while eleven others are currently raising their children along.<sup>14</sup>

The children of Badi mothers and high caste (Brahman, Chetri or Thakuri) clients are generally considered to be Badi by other Nepalese, even though descent in Nepal is patrilineal. For the children of high caste men and Badi women to be accorded a higher caste status, the father would have to admit paternity. But in the vast majority of cases, high caste men, even when they know they have fathered a Badi women's child, will not claim it as his own. Badi women's attempts to bring paternity suits against high caste men are generally unsuccessful, for the judge usually says that since the woman is a prostitute, she has no way of knowing who the father of her child is.

The majority of Badi prostitutes (whether they have children by their clients or not) are unable to get married. Men from other castes usually shun them, and even most Badi men will not marry them. Indeed, there is a rule in Badi society that men cannot marry prostitute girls who are the sole source of support for their families, as that would stop their prostitution and the income that it generates. Thus, Badi men who marry women from their own caste are usually only able to take spouses from families that have three or more daughters (so that the income from one will not be missed) or other income earning resources (such as land, a profitable business or a well-paying job or both).<sup>15</sup> Approximately two-thirds of Badi men end up marrying



women from other untouchable castes-usually Damai (Tailor), Sarki (Shoemaker), or Kami or Tharu women.<sup>16</sup> These women generally live patrilocally in their husbands' homes; and their children are raised as Badi, with the daughters usually entering prostitution themselves to the same extent as those who are offspring of Badi parents in either one or two parent households. Since the income generated from Badi men is so minimal, two parent Badi families usually depend on the earnings of prostitute daughters to the same extent as single, unmarried Badi mothers.

### **Social Organization**

Badi are organized into eight exogamous patrilineal clans. My informants claimed that these clans represent the descendants of Badi who came from specific districts. The presence of the words Kami and Damai in two Badi clan names, however, suggests that the origin of some Badi clans may lie in intermarriages between Badi and members of other castes (or other factors). Badi clans include: Pyuthani, Rolpani, Kami Badi, Salyani, Sankoti, Chinal Damai, Purbiya Badi an Multami.

### **Prostitute Castes in India and a Possible Historical Connection Between one of them and the Badi**

In India there are at least three castes, Nat, Beriya and Kolhant, in which prostitution has existed as a social norm (see Baines 1912; Blunt 1969; Crooke 1974; Sherring 1974).<sup>17</sup> These castes are very similar to the Badi in many respects. They all lead a mostly transient life, wandering from one town to the next putting on song, dance and/or acrobatic performances, and, in the women's case, engaging in prostitution. The Nat, Beriya and Kolhant also each have their own argot, which they use to discuss prostitution (and other matters) without being understood by outsiders (see Blunt 1969).

Beriya men, generally do not marry women from their own caste, as that would stop their prostitution and the income that it generates. In Farrukhabad, Beriya men who marry women from their own caste are expelled from the community. In Etiway, they are heavily fined. Beriya men, in most cases, marry women from other castes of equal status (Blunt 1969: 153).

In India there is a sub-caste of the Nat known as the Badi, whose way of life is (or at least was until recently) almost identical to Badi in Nepal (Baines 1912: 108). Is it possible that Badi in Nepal originally came from this group? If so, how many years ago did the two groups split up? To what extent have the two groups changed over the years? To what extent have they remained the same? These are important ethnographic questions. Unfortunately, the available data on the Nat, Beriya and Kolhant is very

sketchy. The above questions will have to be answered through future research.

### **The Current Status of Badi Prostitution**

The Nepalese government has always considered Badi to be an embarrassment to the country.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, in an effort to bring an end their prostitution, the government has given several Badi families agricultural land and established a school for the Badi in Nepalgunj.<sup>19</sup> There are currently seventy-three Badi students in the Nepalgunj school- forty-eight boys and twenty-five girls. The school currently goes up to the fourth grade but there are plans to add more grades in the coming years.<sup>20</sup>

However, most Badi girls in Nepalgunj who attend school eventually drop out and prostitute themselves. They see almost all other Badi girls around them working as prostitutes. Their parents and other Badi generally still expect them to enter prostitution and they usually do not have many other options for generating income.

Even when other jobs do become available, these jobs are usually rejected, because they do not pay as much as prostitution. For example, officials from the National AIDS Prevention and Control Program attempted to hire several Badi girls to work as peer counsellors to teach Badi prostitutes about the dangers presented by AIDS and the measures they could take to protect themselves against the disease. The peer counsellors were also supposed to encourage Badi girls to give up prostitution by informing them about training and education programs and employment opportunities (such as clothing and handicrafts production). But the officials were unable to find anyone to fill the positions. All the Badi girls said that the positions did not pay enough, and that they could make much more money by working as prostitutes.

Badi girls generally are also given little encouragement from high caste Nepalese society to enter professions other than prostitution, or even to pursue their education. Badi girls who pass through their private school and pursue their studies at public schools are often severely harassed by high caste students. There was also a case, in the Dang Valley, of a high caste headmaster who refused to admit Badi girls to his school, saying that they would corrupt the other students.<sup>21</sup>

The prevailing orthodox high caste Nepalese attitude towards Badi women manifested itself in an incident which occurred during my field work. I had just finished interviewing a group of Badi women in the (exclusively Badi) hamlet of Rajapur (which lies in the Dang Valley), when I was approached by a Brahman landlord who lived nearby. The landlord began to yell at me angrily. "If you came to have sex with Badi women, that would be

acceptable. That is the only reason why other men come here. But you come here day after day and do nothing but talk and take notes. You actually seem to have a friendship with these women. What is wrong with you? Don't you have any respect for yourself?" The orthodox high caste Nepalese attitude is (generally) that untouchables are nothing but service castes. The *Kami* exist to make metalware. The *Damai* live to sew clothes. The *Sarki's* sole purpose on earth is to make shoes, and the only reason the Badi are around is to provide sex. To treat Badi women as anything but sex objects, and to have a close, platonic friendship with them and treat them as equals, is to many orthodox Brahmans, Chetris and Thakuris in Nepal a gross violation of caste boundaries.<sup>22</sup> And yet, as has already been discussed, many high caste Nepalese men who come to Badi prostitutes as clients, end up having enduring serious relationships (or even marriages) with them. The reality of relationships between high caste men and Badi women often differs from the norms defined by orthodox Hinduism.

### The Threat of AIDS

The majority of Badi women in Bardiya, Nepalgunj and Dang now know about AIDS, having been informed by doctors, social workers, public health officials and one anthropologist (i.e., myself). While Badi women claim to be concerned about AIDS, they have not generally decreased their prostitution or taken any other precautionary measures (such as requiring clients to wear condoms).<sup>23</sup>

In February and March of 1991, a team from the National AIDS Prevention and Control Program (NAPCP) tested 228 Badi prostitutes in Nepalgunj and Dang for the HIV-1 (AIDS) virus. They all tested negative.<sup>24</sup> However, the prevalence of AIDS in India (approximately a third of Bombay prostitutes are HIV positive), combined with the large number of Indian men who come, as clients, to Badi prostitutes, almost ensures that it will not be long before HIV enters the Badi community.<sup>25</sup> When it comes, HIV will probably spread rapidly through Badi prostitutes, primarily because of their high rate of infection by sexually transmitted diseases (70 percent of the Badi women tested by the NAPCP team tested positive for sexually transmitted diseases other than AIDS).<sup>26</sup> These diseases cause genital sores through which HIV can easily enter the body.

AIDS, threatens to devastate the Badi. In Tanzania, there is an ethnic group known as the Bahaya, who have a population that is 50 percent HIV positive, one of the highest infection rates in the world (Serrill 1990:44). and then there is the Badi, where the vast majority of sexually mature women prostitute themselves almost daily and usually have children by their clients. It is not difficult to see that the Badi could go the same way as the Bahaya,

and, indeed, reach even higher HIV infection rates, unless preventative measures are taken.

### **The Emotional Impact of Prostitution**

In the Philippines and Thailand, there are programs that have been established to rehabilitate child prostitutes (i.e., girls who have engaged in prostitution from the age of twelve or thirteen). These programs, for the most part, have met with little success.

The girls are usually so emotionally traumatized that they never completely recover and continuously suffer from low self-esteem, depression and a sense of hopelessness concerning the future.

Badi girls, on the other hand, are not usually emotionally traumatized by prostitution. They are no less (or more) happy than the rest of us. They accept prostitution as their fate, the only way of life open to them.

This suggests that what is so emotionally traumatic for some prostitutes in the Philippines, Thailand and elsewhere - is not the physical act of prostitution, but the stigma that society places on it. There is no stigma on prostitution in Badi society; on the contrary, it is the norm. It is precisely because Badi prostitutes receive emotional support from other members of their community that they are not traumatized, as some prostitutes in other societies are.

## Appendix One: The Badi Argot

The Badi argot is, for the most part, Nepali that has been changed by the addition of a variety of syllables (including wa, ma, mi and suru) which are used as prefixes, suffixes, infixes or a combination thereof. There are also, however, some words in the Badi argot that are completely different from their Nepali equivalents. For example, the word for good in the Badi argot is *chido*, whereas in Nepali it is *ramro*. similarly, the word for cooked rice in the Badi argot *suwal*, whereas in Nepali it is *bhat*. The word for drum in the Badi argot is *goodol*, whereas in Nepali it is *madal*. What follows is a list of words and phrases from the Badi argot and their Nepali and English translations.

| Badi              | Nepali       | English     |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Kamaka            | Kaka         | Paternal    |
|                   |              | Uncle       |
| Mamaka            | Mama         | Maternal    |
|                   |              | Uncle       |
| Hamsure           | Hami         | We          |
| Bawamzee          | Banzee       | Niece       |
| Gumtiyar          | Natedar      | Relative    |
| Aimamai           | Aimai        | Woman       |
| Lamagni Mamanchis | Logne Manche | Man         |
| Bombain           | Baini        | Younger     |
|                   |              | Sister      |
| Sumangat          | Sathi        | Friend      |
| Suwal             | Bhat         | Cooked Rice |
| Kaksila           | Rakshi       | Liquor      |
| Namatchu          | Nachchu      | Dance       |
| Kimelchi          | Khelchu      | Play        |
| Amaza             | Aja          | Today       |
| Himija            | Hijo         | Yesterday   |
| Amasti            | Austi        | Day Before  |
|                   |              | Yesterday   |
| Boongoli          | Bholi        | Tomorrow    |
| Yumo Sal          | Yo Sal       | This Year   |
| Pamiley           | Pahile       | Before      |
| Pumachey          | Pachi        | After       |
| Ma Goodol         | Ma Madal     | I Play the  |
| Bazhmachu         | Bazaunchu    | Drum        |
| Jai Gu, Tu La Bo  | Aunus, Wahaa | Come Here,  |

Ley Guney

Dimeri  
Lumamo  
Tumaoco  
Hamat  
Kumata  
Bimey  
Pumardchu  
Samanchey  
Bimamarey  
Gimit

Ley Janus

Dherai  
Lamo  
Taoco  
Hat  
Khuta  
Bihey  
Pardchu  
Sanchai  
Birami  
Git

Take Him and

Go  
A Lot  
Long  
Head  
Hand  
Foot  
Marriage  
Read  
Well  
Sick  
Song

## Appendix Two: Badi Religion

One of the most important thing that ethnographic research has taught us about Nepal, is that there is no uniform, pristine version of Hinduism which exists throughout the country. Every Hindu community selects some elements from the orthodox tradition, but rejects others, has local deities which are not worshipped elsewhere, and, in many cases, follows certain Animist traditions as well. Every Hindu community in Nepal has its own unique version of Hinduism.

Badi Hinduism is no exception. For example, the Badi worship several gods, some local and others from the main Hindu pantheon. One of the most important Badi deities is Bageshwori, the Hindu goddess of speech. Badi from Bardiya and Dang-Dekhuri often go to worship Bageshwori at a local temple in Nepalgunj, as well as in their own communities and homes.<sup>27</sup>

The local gods worshipped by the Badi include Kalimati, Kairibang, Pane Khola and Bagpati. All of these gods are believed to live in particular locations in the hills above the Dang valley.<sup>28</sup>

Once every three years, Badi (both men and women) from the Dang Valley go to Kalimati and sacrifice a *boca* (uncastrated male goat) to the god who resides there.

Every year, in March, many Badi also attend a religious festival, the *Patan mella*, in the town of Krishnanagar on the Nepal-India boarder. The primary purpose of this festival is to pay homage to Bageshwori (through worship and offerings of money, flowers, vermilion powder and/or milk).<sup>29</sup>

### Badi Origin Myths

During the course of my research, I was told two different Badi origin myths by my informants. I will relate and discuss them here, as they constitute a valuable symbolic lens through which we can better understand how the Badi view themselves and the Hindu caste system.

#### Origin Myth One: The Curse of Mahadev

Badi used to work as servants for the god Mahadev, cooking his food and serving it to him. But instead of working, they would spend much of their time in the kitchen dancing and singing. During the course of such merry-making, they would often forget about the rice being cooked. As a result, the rice was often burnt. Finally, Mahadev became so angry at being fed burnt rice that he kicked the Badi out of his home and threw a curse on them. "If you like to dance and sing so much, from now on that is all you will do," said Mahadev. From that time on all the Badi have done is sing and dance.

### **Origin Myth Two: The Two Brahman Brothers**

Once there were two Brahman brothers who were very different from one another. The older brother studied hard in school and went on to become a successful priest and scholar. The younger brother was lazy and irresponsible. As a child he never went to school, choosing, instead, to spend all his time wandering through the forest shooting birds with his slingshot. Eventually the younger brother got married and had three daughters. But he was too poor to build a house, and thus he slept under trees and wandered from village to village with his family, begging for food. Finally, when his daughters got big, they began dancing and singing for a living. The descendants of the younger Brahman sing for a living.

### **Discussion**

Some Badi believe that their current way of life is the result of Mahadev's curse. Because Mahadev is a god his curse is not to be questioned. The way of life that he has established for the Badi must be accepted. That, essentially, is the fatalistic attitude. Only some Badi, however, believe this myth. Many others do not.

The second origin myth is accepted by more Badi than the first. This myth is seen, by many Badi, as proof that they were originally Brahmans and thus deserve a higher status than that which the wider Hindu caste Nepalese society accords them today. I did not meet one other Nepalese (from any other caste), however, who believed the Badi claim that they were originally Brahmans.

The caste system in west Nepal is stronger than in many other parts of the country. Many, if not most Hindu Nepalese in west Nepal, including Badi, accept the caste system, its theory that certain occupations can only be performed by certain groups of people, and that all people should be ranked along an axiom of purity and pollution. Through the myth of the two Brahman brothers, the Badi have attempted to raise their status within the caste system. They have not, however, rejected the system itself.<sup>30</sup>

### **Notes**

1. The Badi sang and danced at festivals, weddings and private parties.
2. The Badi also used to go to India. some of my informants used to go annually (in November) to the Indian town of Sunpur, where they would dance and sing at a religious festival. My informants also said that a little over one hundred years ago, there was a king in the Indian town of Isanagar who had a Badi wife (who eventually left him and returned to her home district of Salyan).
3. Musikot lies in Rukum district.



4. My informants claimed that the ruler's generous remuneration-for singing, dancing and sexual favors-had spoiled the Badi, enabled them to lead a luxurious life without having to work very hard. As a result, when the Badi lost the ruler's patronage, they found themselves unable to give up prostitution for more arduous, lower paying work.
5. My informants told me that Badi men usually do not approach prospective clients or become involved in bargaining. This is almost always the mother's (and other women's) or prostitute daughter's responsibility. This was backed up by my own experiences. There were several times when I walked into a Badi community and was approached by women offering me the services of their daughters (or the daughters of relatives or neighbors). But I was never approached by men. The offers of girls were usually made during my first visits to Badi communities, before they knew me. When the Badi discovered I was conducting research (and not looking for sex with Badi girls) the offers usually stopped.
6. In Nepalgunj, the majority of Badi clients are Indian men; and in both Nepalgunj and Tulsipur Indian clients come from as far away as Bombay.
7. Over the last three years many Badi families have come from Bagar (a small village in a remote part of the Dang Valley), Pyuthan and Salyan, and settled in Tulsipur (a bazaar town in the Dang valley), because of the good market for prostitutes there (due to Tulsipur's large population of merchants, drivers, civil servants and other single men "inclined" to look for female companionship). Most of these recently settled Badi families have been able to buy land and build houses in the Tulsipur area (primarily with income generated from prostitution). Many Badi families have two houses, one usually in some remote area (often where they were born) and another in a urban setting, like Nepalgunj, where there is a good market for prostitutes. I met one Badi man who owned three houses, one in Bagar, another in Tulsipur and yet another in Nepalgunj. He had four daughters, all in their teens and twenties, who were working as prostitutes thus generating enough income for him to acquire such a substantial amount of property.  
When a Badi girl begins to work as a prostitute, her mother will often retire, secure in the knowledge that she will now be supported by her daughter. Badi women also cease prostituting themselves if they get married, and, of course, when they can no longer attract customers (because of age or other factors).
9. The names of case study subjects have been changed to protect their identities.

10. There are three hierarchically ranked categories in Nepal's caste system. The top ranking category is known as *tagadhari* and includes "twice-born" castes (Brahmans, Chetris and Thakuris). The middle category is known as *matwali*, and includes all of Nepal's indigenous tribal groups, including the Tharu (a tribe of Mongolian origin who live in Nepal's southern *terai* belt and speak an Indo-European language). The lowest category is known as *pani na chalne* and includes all the untouchable castes. However, while the Tharu are ranked more highly in Nepal's caste system than Badi, both groups are in many instances equally discriminated against by high-caste (*tagadhari*) Nepalese.
11. I was fortunate enough to be able to talk at length with both Jamuna and Prakash, and Sunil and Pravina. In most other cases of relations between Badi women and high caste men, I was only able to get the women's description of the relationship
12. Apart from Jamuna (Prakash's lover), I only met one other Badi woman who had used birth control. She had had herself sterilized following the birth of her third child.
13. One possible reason why so many Badi women have only one or two children is that scar tissue from sexually transmitted diseases builds up in their fallopian tubes, preventing further conception.
14. Several of these women have parents or brothers and sisters, who have also helped look after the children.
15. Matrilateral cross-cousin marriage (i.e., when a man marries his mother's brother's daughter) is the norm for Badi men who marry women from their own caste. Matrilateral cross-cousin marriage is also found among some other untouchable castes-including Damai, Kami and Sunar (Goldsmith)-in west Nepal.
16. I also encountered a case of a Badi man with a Magar wife (the Magar being a Tibeto-Burman tribe who live in the middle hills of west Nepal).
17. The available data on Beriya and Kolhant is rather old. It is possible that prostitution in these two societies has decreased in recent years, or that the societies have changed in other ways.
18. Periodically the police in Nepalgunj crack-down on Badi prostitution, raiding Gogangunj (the area of Nepalgunj where Badi prostitutes live and work) on a daily basis to arrest clients (only occasionally do they arrest Badi prostitutes). The crack-downs last up to two months, during which time clients often stop coming to Gogangunj, thus forcing the Badi to live off their savings or sell their possession or both. The sporadic crack-downs have thus far not decreased the number of Badi prostitutes working in Gogangunj.

19. The Badi who received agricultural land have continued to engage in prostitution to the same extent as before.
20. This school was established as part of a joint agreement between the Nepali government and Danish Volunteer Service.
21. In Nepalgunj there are four teenage Badi girls (from a total of thirty-five households) who are currently studying in local schools and not prostituting themselves. In Tulsipur there are only two teenage Badi girls (from a total of 15 surveyed households) who are currently studying in local schools and not prostituting themselves.
22. The prevailing orthodox high caste attitude that Badi women exist only to provide an essential biological need (i.e. sex) is reflected in the way Brahman, Chetri and Thakuri men interact with Badi prostitutes. High caste clients often (but certainly not always) go in a group to a Badi prostitute and take turns having intercourse with her. In other words, they don't usually "romance" Badi prostitutes, but interact with them only to the extent needed to satisfy their sexual urges. Another reason why high caste clients often take turns with a single girl is to save money, since Badi prostitutes often charge for a fixed period of time rather than on a per client basis.
23. In Nepalgunj about 50 percent of Badi prostitute clients use condoms, while in Tulsipur the rate is less than ten percent. When I asked men in Tulsipur why they did not wear condoms, the usual answer was "this town is too small. If I buy condoms, the shopkeeper will tell other people; everyone in Tulsipur will know I am consorting with prostitutes, and my reputation will be ruined." Nepalgunj, on the other hand, is a larger and more populous city where men can buy condoms anonymously. Thus, condom use among Badi prostitute clients in Nepalgunj is more prevalent.
24. Eugene Vadies (World Health Organization, Global Program on AIDS) and Dr. Puspa Bhatta, Medical Officer, National AIDS Prevention and Control Program, personal communication.
25. Statistics on HIV positive cases in Bombay come from Dr. Jacob John, a WHO consultant.
26. Dr. Pushpa Bhatta and Eugene Vadies, personal communication.
27. The fact that the Badi's patron deity, Bageshwori, is a goddess of speech, could be connected to the Badi's origin as singers, story-tellers and dancers.
28. My informants told me that the Jajarkot Badi have their own patron deity, a local god known as Barma, which is worshipped only by them and not by Badi from other places.

29. My informants told me that until five years ago, the *Patan Mella* was a relatively peaceful, crime-free event, but that now it is plagued by pickpockets and armed robbers. As a result, the number of Badi attending the festival has declined significantly.
30. The caste system defines a particular social identity and way of life for the Badi (as well as for members of all other castes). In the West however, individuals must search for and create their own social identity, a process which can bring with it a profound sense of insecurity and uncertainty that is not found - to the same extent - in Hindu caste societies.

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## THE INDRA JĀTRĀ OF KATHMANDU AS A ROYAL FESTIVAL: PAST AND PRESENT

Gérard Toffin

The Indra Jātrā is one of the main Newar festivals of Kathmandu, together with Pāhā Caṇray (March-April), Janabāhādyah Jātrā (March-April) and Mvahnī (September-October). Its Newari name, Yemnyāḥ, derives from either the Newari name of the capital of Nepal (= Yem) or the word Endayāta, a local corrupted form for Indra Jātrā<sup>1</sup>. The Festival lasts for eight days from the twelfth of the bright half of Bhadra (August-September) until the fourth day of the dark half of Āśvin (September-October) during the rainy season. According to the Newar calendar, it falls entirely within Yamḷā (or Nālā), the sixth month of the year. Indra Jātrā involves nearly all the Newar city dwellers of Kathmandu, Buddhist and Hindu, *jyūpi* (pure castes) and *majyūpi* (impure castes). A great number of rituals are performed during these eight days, most on a collective urban basis, but some also at a domestic and *guthi* (from Skt. *goṣṭhi*) associational level. Clearly, this festival is not merely a public formality, but a lively religious celebration which concerns many areas of the urban life.

According to the local tradition, the origins of Indra Jātrā date back to the very creation of the city. The recent chronicles report straightforwardly that the festival was established in the eleventh century by King Gunakamadeva, the alleged founder of Kathmandu. However, the oldest evidence we are aware of is a stone inscription from Bhaktapur dating from the fifteenth century<sup>2</sup>. During the late medieval period, at a time when the Newars were still the controlling power over the Kathmandu Valley, Indra Jātrā was the main collective festival (*mu* or *deś Jātrā*) of the small Kathmandu's Malla Kingdom. It stood for Kathmandu as Bisket Jatra for Bhaktapur and Rāto Matsyendranāth Jātrā (New. Bumgadyahyah) for Lalitpur. These three festivals, performed on different dates of the religious year, were an established feature of urban life and a matter of considerable pride. They enhanced the identity of the three former petty Newar kingdoms.

Structurally, Indra Jatra is made up of three different series of rituals: Kumārī Jātrā, Indra Jātrā and Bhairava Jātrā,<sup>3</sup> each one concentrated on a specific god. Though there are more or less related to each other, these three complex ceremonial components have their own myths and can be analysed quite independently. An hypothesis worth considering is that they originated separately and were brought together in a latter stage. Obviously, the cult of Indra (this god is often called *Yemnyāḥdyah* in Newari) forms one of the oldest strata of the festival. But the Kumārī Jātrā, in its turn, was established only by Jaya Prakas Malla (1735-1768): there is indeed some reasons to believe that this ritual was detached from *Mvaḥnī* (= *Durgāpūjā*), of which the Kumārī Pūjā is traditionally an element, and was given a spectacular theatrical expression during the Indra Jātrā in order to strengthen the royal Malla dynasty, which was facing Gorkha's armies in the second part of the eighteenth century. We know little about the origin of the Bhairava Jātrā, and it is difficult to ascertain whether it was celebrated from the beginning along with the festival of Indra or not. We should recall in this connection that the large Śveta Bhairava head affixed to an outside wall of the old royal palace behind a lattice piece of work and displayed only during Indra Jātrā is post-Malla; it was offered by Rana Bahadur Shah in honor of Indra at his festival in a.D. 1795<sup>4</sup>. But, on the whole, it seems that the celebration of Bhairava (New. *Ajudyah* or *Bhailah*) during the festival of Indra is very old and deeply rooted in the Newar folk-culture. It can be noticed in this respect that the Newar *Jyāpu* farmers, who undoubtedly are among the oldest dwellers of Kathmandu Valley,<sup>5</sup> have very close relationships with this god as well as with Indra.

The rituals focus on several interrelated themes: the relation between life and death, the king's cosmic order, and the general prosperity of the country. Indeed, Indra Jātrā is a multi-facet festival, which in my opinion cannot be reduced to a single meaning. Here I shall restrict my topic to the cult of Indra proper and its related rituals, and analyse their significance from the viewpoint of kingship, ancient and modern<sup>6</sup>. One first point deserves notice: although the Malla Kingdom of Kathmandu disappeared more than two centuries ago during the process of unification of Nepal, Indra Jātrā in its above mentioned restricted sense is still celebrated today in a way which differs little in its essentials from the Malla period. Everything suggests that present Newar festivals reflect without much change the religious aspects of Malla kingship. As will be shown, the shah kings and Rana prime Ministers introduced new elements in the festival of Indra during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but by and large they have preserved most of the Newar kings' rituals and confirmed the old *guthi* lands which were traditionally dedicated to their performance. In doing so, they were searching to legitimate

their power in the eyes of the Newar local population and reinforce the various sacra attached to their throne. Furthermore, the shift of the royal palace in the beginning of the twentieth century from inside the precincts of the old historic city has not altered the basic spatial structure of the festival. The Hanuman Dhoka, the ancient Malla palace in the centre of Kathmandu, is no more the seat of political power, but it still plays a crucial role in all local Newar festivities. Up to now, it has been considered as the symbolic centre of the city, and the main rituals connected with kingship are performed in or around it. Even the sacred sword which belongs to the divine Shah ruler and which embodies the *sakti* of kingship is still kept in the Hanuman Dhoka.

As it is performed today, Indra Jātrā is two-fold. On the one hand, it enhances the existing Nepalese monarchy, originally alien to the Newar's own culture. On the other hand, it keeps alive the glorious past (i.e., the Malla period) of the indigenous population of the Kathmandu Valley. As with most of the ancient royal rituals of the Valley, this festival is an important preservative agent of the cultural traditions of the Newars. Every year, after a nominal recognition of the present authorities, it strengthens the ethnic identity of the group. From a sociological point of view, such a dialectic between state centralization and local ethnic assertion is one of the most interesting and pervasive aspects of the modern Indra Jātrā.

### The Ceremonial Pole and the Banner of Indra

The beginning of the festival is marked by the erection of an approximately sixty feet high pole called *yaḥṣṭ* in Newari and *liṅga* in Nepali<sup>7</sup>. The pole bears a banner known as *hari patāḥ*, which is kept inside the old Malla palace of Hanuman Dhoka during the rest of the year. The banner is under the supervision of Guthi Samsthan, a state agency in charge of religious endowments. The eight signs of good luck, *aṣṭa maṅgala*, are painted on this piece of cloth. Branches and fruits (especially *bhogaṭe*, a kind of pommelo), evidently symbols of fertility, as well as a small national flag, are fixed on the top of the *yaḥṣṭ*. In the religious calendar, sold in Nepal, the *pātro*, this pole and its banner are also known as *indrādhvaja*, the banner of Indra. The pole-raising ceremony itself is known by the sanskrit expressions *Indradhvajothāna*.

The *yaḥṣṭ* is a pine-tree (*sāla*) selected a year before the festival from a small forest called Yaḥṣṭ Gū near Nala. Traditionally, the representatives of the nine Mānandhar's (oil-pressers) "wards" of Kathmandu participated to its selection. A goat was set free in the above mentioned forest, and the tree against which the goat rubbed its back was chosen. Now days the rituals have been simplified and the selection of the tree (and its transport) has been given

in contract to a person belonging to another caste group. But the tree is still cut down one month before the festival, and a goat is still sacrificed before it is felled. A Parbatiya Brahman, appointed by the *rāj purohit* of the king, must worship the tree at that time and perform an offering to Ban Devī, the Nepali Goddess of the Forest. Incidentally, the tree used for the ceremonial pillar erected in Bhaktapur during Bisket Jatra is selected in the same forest and according to the same rules. However, in that case, the *yaḥṣī* is called by the sanskrit name *viśvadhvaḥ*, the banner of the Universe. To come back to the *indrādhvaḥ* of Kathmandu, once cut, the tree is shaped into a pole and carried by the army (formerly by the Manandhars) to Thimi, a large village between Bhaktapur and the capital, and then to Kathmandu. the pole is first brought to the northern part of the old city, near Bhotahiti, on *Kāyā Aṣṭamī* day, that is, the eighth day of the bright half of Bhādra. Four days later, it is taken through Indrachok (another reference to Indra) to Hanuman Dhoka, near the statue of Kāl Bhairava, for erection.

At present, the official date for the pole-raising ceremony is the twelveth of the bright half of Bhādra, in the morning, at an auspicious moment, *sait*, determined by astrologers attached to the royal palace. The exact time is chosen nearly one month before, during *Kṛṣṇa Aṣṭamī*. There is some evidence, however, that until the reign of Pratap Singh Shah (1775-77), the pole-raising occurred on the eleventh day of the bright half of Bhādra<sup>8</sup>, which is still today considered by some sources to be the correct time for the beginning of the festival<sup>9</sup>. It is on this very day that the king sends invitations to Kumārī, Gaṇeśh and Bhairava to attend the festival and that the head masks of Bhairava are brought out into the streets and displayed on sheds raised for the occasions.

Indra's pole and its banner are erected, *yaḥṣī thanegu* (New.), in front of Hanuman Dhoka, in the historic centre of the city. The heavy *yaḥṣī* is tugged and pulled with bamboos and thick ropes to slowly raise it. Its base is inserted in a hole, often filled with water, which bears a *yoni* design on the surface. Hundreds of spectators watch, crowded into the palace square, and gun shots salute. Formerly, the pole was raised by the Mānandhar oil-pressers of the capital. But for the last ten years police recruits have replaced the oil-pressers. Only the leader (*nāyo*) of the Mānandhars has to be present today to witness the ritual<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, the king no longer attends the ceremony, as he did until the rule of king Tribhuvan (1911-1955). He is only represented by a white horse from the royal stable and by a sacred sword, *khadga*, wrapped with cloth. This sword, ordinarily kept in the former Malla royal palace, is held during the ritual by the supervisor, *hākīm*, of Hanuman Dhoka or by a person designated by him<sup>11</sup>. In 1992, the holder was a Newar Jyāpu from Lalitpur, in full official dress. At the end of the ceremony, the sword is



circumambulated three times around the pole, followed by *Damāñ* musicians, a detachment of a Gorkhali regiment in ancient uniforms, bearing outmoded rifles and sabres, and a military band. Then the National anthem is played by the army in front of the sword. All these elements stand as symbols of the present ruling Shah family. Let us stress in this connection that it is not the Taleju's horse (the former Malla kings' protective deity) who has to witness the ceremony, but the Shah king's one. The rituals have been clearly reshaped by the new ruling dynasty and by the dominant Parbatiya elite.

Until recently, most of the senior government officials were present in the Hanuman Dhoka palace throughout the night on the eleventh day of the bright half of Bhādra and the next morning for the pole-raising ceremony. When I first saw the festival in 1970, only a few officials were there. In 1992, the royal astrologer, the royal *purohit* and his assistant, the head of the Guthi Samsthan and the *hākim* of Hanuman Dhoka palace (a Newar himself) were present. All of them were interviewed during the ceremony by Nepal TV journalists who came to film the event. The supervisor of Hanuman Dhoka gave a bitter comment on the way the Guthi Samsthan was managing, without any efficacy according to him, the expenses of the Indra Jātrā. This institution's role, long controversial, has been a matter of brisk discussion between officers in charge of the royal rituals. It has been placed under the direction of the Ministry of Land Re-form after the dramatic changes of 1990 and the restoration of a democratic regime in Nepal. Nowadays, some of the expenditures of Indra Jatra are directly under the control of the Department of Archeology. It is important in any case to note the presence of the royal priest (*purohit*) of the current Shah dynasty during the pole-raising. This Brahman, attached to the new Narayan Hiti palace, has to worship the base and the top of the pine tree before its erection. As we will see later on, other Brahmans and priests are appointed to the cult of Indra during the course of the festival.

One group of Newar mask-dancers also attends the ceremony. They are Jyāpu farmers from Kilagal. Their dance called *devi pyākhā*, includes the Kumārī, Bhairava, Caṇḍī, Vetālā, and an unmasked *daitya* (demon) wearing an ornament (*mukut*) on the head. According to Rajendra Pradhan: "Bhairava and Kumārī have to fight with the *daitya*. The demon once ruled the three worlds. Unable to stand this state of affairs, Bhairava assaulted the demon while he was dancing alone. They fought hard and long. Bhairava, unable to defeat the demon, appealed to Kumārī for help. Kumārī then fought with the demon, recharging her energy (*śakti*) whenever he conceded defeat. She finally killed him"<sup>12</sup>. During the pole-raising, these dancers perform only a brief dance. The *devi pyākhā* is repeated in a more complete way some days later in Kilagal.

Indra's pole is lowered eight days later, on the fourth of the dark fortnight of Āśvin, at a time fixed by the royal astrologer, usually between 10 and 11 pm. This ritual is called *indrādhvajapātana* in the Nepalese religious calendar. The stones which maintain the *yāhśī* in its hole are removed, and the pine-tree suddenly falls, within seconds, on the straw-covered ground. The moment it comes to rest upon the ground, hundreds of worshippers rush forward to touch it with their foreheads. Some teenagers hurl down and throw bundles of straw to each other in a rather surrealistic battle. In 1991, this excitement produced severe trouble with the police: 34 persons were wounded. Next year, special police forces were posted all around the Hanuman Dhoka palace, but no clash occurred.

The *yāhśī* is then dragged by the army recruits toward the lower part of the city, through Jaisidewal, Hyumat and Teku, and immersed at the confluence of the Visnumati and the Bagmati. The *rāj purohit* of the Shah royal family is also present at that time. He offers some rice, flowers and red powder (New. *sinhaḥ*) to the pole before its immersion in the water. A. Bake saw the wood being used by the *sadhus* living near the confluence for heating<sup>13</sup>. But normally, the pole is taken away by the *Pode* (fishermen) in charge of the nearby temple of Pacali, the Bhairava of the southern part of Kathmandu. This is probably why some informants reported that pieces of the *yāhśī* have to be burnt and the ashes scattered on this very Bhairava's temple. In the old days, the Manandhars of the city used to buy the pole from *Pode* and make use of it in their oil presses.

### Indra Jātrā and Classical India

For a full understanding of the ceremonial pole and its link with kingship in the modern context, we have to look backward to Hindu tradition. As is well known, Indra, in classical India, is closely associated with the royal function. He is the king of the gods and of the world, the prototype of sovereignty in its warlike, dominating and dynamic aspects. The king is the representative of Indra on earth. Some texts even assert that the ruler can attain the condition of king of the gods if he remains faithful to his duties. More generally, Indra is linked with the Ksatriyas. He is the great deity of the warrior class, the one who destroys the enemies. His strength is said to be prodigious.

As a matter of fact, a royal ritual very similar to the existing Nepalese Indra Jātrā was performed in ancient India. It was called *indramaha*, *indramahotsva* or *indrayajña*. Sanskrit texts give several descriptions and comments on it. The *Viṣṇudharmottara* (II, CLV) tells us, for instance, that Indra's banner was created by Indra with the help of Viṣṇu during the churning of the primeval ocean of milk to defend the gods from the attacks of

the *asuras*.<sup>14</sup> Raised on the ceremonial chariot of Indra, the banner frightened the demons and gave the victory to the gods. Likewise, the king who raises a similar *dhvaja* every year, adorned with jewels and precious pieces of cloth, will overcome his enemies. His subjects will be protected from disease and other misfortune; they will have an abundance of food and will be contented. *Indramaha* was consequently a very important festival for the ruler. The banner of Indra appears to be a sort of emblem of the king. Let us remark that this ritual brings victory and is at the same time related to the general welfare of the kingdom; two complementary aspects which, as we will discuss later on, always go together among the kingly features of Indra.

The *Viṣṇudharmottara* also provides interesting details on the manner of celebrating this ritual. The *indramaha* has to be performed during the bright half of Bhādra (as is actually done in Nepal), in other words during the rainy season. The tree should be selected on a auspicious day by Brahmans assisted by carpenters. It can be of six kinds: either *arjuna* (*Terminalia arjuna*), *aśvakarna* (*Vatica robusta*), *prikaya* (*Terminalia tormentosa*), *dhava* (*Grislea tormentosa*), *udumbara* (*Ficus glomerata*) or bamboo<sup>15</sup>. According to the way it falls, the astrologers make some prophecies. Then the tree is immersed in water and carried into the city accompanied by numerous dancing and singing people. The peasants decorate the pole with crowns of flowers, clothes, handkerchiefs, and so forth. The *indraddhvaja* is revered in this way for twelve days. Then it is raised under the direction of the king surrounded by his ministers. He worships the pole with flowers, food items, and perfumes. The banner has to be lowered on the fifth day and carried by elephants to the river where it is immersed.<sup>16</sup>

The *Mahābhārata* (*Ādiparvan*, ch. LXIII) also refers to the *indraddhvaja* festival. It states that this religious feast was initiated by a very pious king named Uparicara or Vasu. This king left his kingdom to live in the forest as a hermit. The gods were afraid of this threatening ascetic behaviour. They asked Indra to divert Vasu from such a way of life. Then Indra gave him a bamboo staff as a gift to protect the people. The following year, Vasu planted the pole in the earth to pay homage to Indra. Since that day, kings have followed the example of Vasu. Every year they erect a bamboo pole, with ornaments and garlands suspended on it, as a reverence to the king of the gods. "The king who performs this ceremony, promised Indra, will obtain victory over his enemies: his kingdom will be prosperous and will have plenty of crops." Kings even carried this staff onto the battle-field; its destruction meant the defeat of the ruler.<sup>17</sup>

As in Kathmandu Valley, Brahman priests took an active part in this ancient royal ceremony and acted in collaboration with kings throughout the rituals. Referring to ancient texts (*Atharvavede among others*), J. Gonda

writes: "The monarch and his *purohita* should bathe, put on new and unwashed clothes, anoint themselves with sweet-smelling unguents of an excellent kind, in a mood belonging to the religious action, observing their vows, and without breaking their fast, celebrate together the festival known as *indramahotsava* in other words, Indra's feast. The *purohita* should take hold of the king with his hand (...) and pour the oblation into the fire".<sup>18</sup> The priest had to recite some stanzas taken from the *Vedas* during the pole-raising ceremony and use *śānti* rituals to ward off evils in the event that anything goes wrong. "He also has to consecrate the king with a series of formulas taken from the *Atharvaveda* and used, in the *Kauśika-sūtra*, in a battle rite, in order to gain victory."<sup>19</sup>

The link between Indra's feast and the king is also perfectly clear in these old texts. The aim of this rite was to consolidate and preserve the power of the king. "By celebrating the *indramahotsava*, the kingdom becomes day by day greater, the king attains the position of sole ruler of the earth and shall live a full lifetime. This is why the process of erecting the tree should be carefully watched by an astrologer: any accident or derivation from the prescribed source of action is significant for the future of the ruler and the realm. If for instance a vulture alights on the tree, there is a danger of death."<sup>(20)</sup>

The similarities between these textual traditions and the Indra Jātrā of Kathmandu Valley are striking. The Nepalese festival of Indra is unquestionably based upon ancient Indian beliefs and rituals. In this connection, attention must be paid to another interesting point. In classical India, *indrādhvaja* was closely related to theatrical performance. The feast of Indra's banner was associated with plays in which the king himself appeared on the stage.<sup>21</sup> Now, we know from Capucin missionaries that plays were performed in the beginning of the eighteenth century inside the royal palace of Kathmandu, Nāsal chok, during Indra Jatra.<sup>22</sup> In Nepal as in India, theatre was often a kingly affair. Even now, a series of pantomimes illustrating the ten incarnations of Lord Visnu, *daśa avatāra*, is acted on the fourteenth of the bright half of Bhādra on a stage in front of the former royal palace, Hanuman Dhoka. Until the mid twentieth century, the king of Nepal used to sit on a movable throne, *gaḍḍi*, to watch these sketches. This was called *gaḍḍi cvanegu* in Newari or *gaḍḍi ārohaṇa samāroha* in Sankrit.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Indra's festival is traditionally a time for performance of popular plays (*pyākhā* or *jyāpu pyākhā* in Newari) all over the Kathmandu Valley, in towns as well as villages.

What can be said about the symbolism of Indra's banner? In which way was it relevant to Nepalese kingship? In spatial terms, first of all, this ceremonial pole reinforces the central location of the palace in the city. It

emphasizes the centrality of the king in the urban society and gives a social content to the Malla's palace. Through the rituals, the ruler was viewed as the coordinator and the sustainer of the realm. But there is more to say. The pole raised in front of the royal palace also incarnates, in some respects, the cosmic pillar that supports the universe and the *axis mundi* linking Heaven and Earth.<sup>24</sup> It symbolises the very road along which the blessings of Heaven reach the Earth. According to some Newar scholars, the word *yahsī* (which etymologically comes from *yah*, "beloved", and *si*, "wood") itself could be derived from the Newari *yalasi*<sup>25</sup> which designates the sacrificial stake *yūpa* of Hindu tradition, a stake associated with important cosmological significance. Through this play of metaphors between microcosm and macrocosm, the palace merges with that of Indra in heaven, and thus gains a cosmic dimension.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the king was ritually identified with Indra. We may, however, mention in this connection that a bronze, gold-plated statue of the king of the gods is still set on a platform (New.: *dabū*) on which the throne of the king was formerly placed during coronations.<sup>26</sup> This statue of Indra is ordinarily housed inside the temple of *Degutale*, one of the tutelary gods of the former Malla royal family. It is brought out on the first day of the festival in a procession led by farmers of the Jyāpu caste and placed on the central platform of Nāsal chok, in Hanuman Dhoka. It is displayed on this spot for eight days and worshipped daily (*nitya pūjā*) by the supervisor of Hanuman Dhoka or a member of his staff. On the first and last days, Newar Rājopādhyāya Brahmans from Indra chok come to pay homage to the deity. This custom is said to date back to King Pratap Malla (1641-1674). Even if the identification between the king and Indra is not totally clear, we have evidence in this peculiar case of close parallelism between the earthly king and his divine prototype during the rituals.

We may go further in the symbolic significance of Indra's feast by considering its position within the annual religious calendar. As we pointed out earlier, according to the Hindu tradition, *indramaha* was originally established to defeat the enemies of the gods, in other words the *asuras* who threaten the order of the world. It is worth noticing in this respect that the Indra Jatra falls during the Four months, *caturmās*, of the rainy season. During these months Viṣṇu is sleeping on his Nāga bed, leaving the world to disorder. It is a time of unrest and disturbance particularly difficult for the Hindu king. As a matter of fact, the whole of the month of Bhādra is symbolically a period of contestation and licence in the Kathmandu Valley. The demons who have apparently dethroned the gods dance in the streets (*lākhe pyākhā*) and threaten the universe. The people gather in certain parts of the city and improvise comic scenes, *khyālah*, which target political or

religious personality, a rich merchant or a well-known person. Viewed in this light, we may wonder if the raising of Indra's banner does not express the strength and the authority of the king over disrupting forces. The demons disappear and criticisms cease at the end of the festival. Like the Durgā Pūjā (*Mvahnī*) one month later, Indra Jātrā can be seen as a ritual of renewal of royal power, putting an end - at least temporarily - to anarchic elements and restoring the king's order.

### Village Cults in India and the Kathmandu Valley

With one exception in Orissa, this royal symbolic enactment is no longer performed in India<sup>27</sup>. Here, as in other areas, the Kathmandu Valley appears to be a particularly conservative place which has preserved old Indian traditions elsewhere vanished. However, as Gonda has rightly remarked,<sup>28</sup> the traditional festivals of Indra in classical India fall in two categories: some, based on sanskrit texts, were performed in the capital of the kingdom; others were celebrated by villagers in different localities according to unwritten ancestral tradition. The second type of festival still exists today in the subcontinent, especially in Bengal focusing mainly on the fertility functions of Indra. It is worth quoting in this connection P. Mahapatra's study on the tree symbol worship: "The tribal people of the western border of Bengal have a special regard for the *Sāl* (*Shorea Robusta*) tree. It is believed that the *Sāl* tree is the symbol of Indra. The tree is worshipped for general welfare, victory in battle, bumper crop and success in life. During the festival of *indradvaja* this tree is worshipped ..... The *Sāl* tree is worshipped on the twelfth day of the brighter half of the moon in the month of Bhadra (July-August). Before the day of worship, two *sal* trees are marked in the forest. On the day of worship these two marked trees are cut and brought to the place of worship, planted side by side, decorated with leaves, flowers and pieces of new cloth. A big umbrella made of bamboo and cloth is placed on the top of the trees. The trees are worshipped. Curd and puffed rice (*khai*) are offered to them. The umbrella is called *indrachhatra*, the umbrella of Indra. This is not only a ritual or a religious ceremony, but it has its social significance. It continues for about a week and the people of the locality are invited to attend the ceremony and have a mass feast. They rejoice with music and dance. In the medieval period, this ceremony was limited to local chiefs and rich businessmen, but nowadays it is also observed by the tribal people."<sup>29</sup>

In this area also, the similarities with Kathmandu Valley are striking. Such local festivals in honour of Indra are not performed in every Newar village. But in at least one case, in Pyangaon (Lalitpur district), it is still celebrated in a very similar way to its manner of celebration in West Bengal. The main festival of this village, *deśjātrā*, takes place at the end of Bhādra and the

beginning of Āśvin, during the time of Indra Jatra. It lasts for eleven days and involves all the villagers. Theatrical plays and worship of Kāleśvar Mahadev, the tutelary deity of the locality, are enacted. The interesting point is that two poles, called here also *yaḥsi* or *lyahsi*, are erected in the village street during this communal feast. The two pillars, which are attached together, are made of pine tree. Contrary to what happens in Kathmandu, they are not changed every year; during the rest of the year they are kept in the collective *guthi* house. They symbolise *Tāhādyah*, "the great god." One is considered male, the second female. The lower parts are covered with straw of wheat and of sugarcane. Small umbrellas, made of bamboo and leaves, are placed on the top. These *yaḥsi* are raised on the eleventh of the bright fortnight of Bhadra and lowered on the fifth of the dark fortnight of Asvin. During this period, they are worshipped by the elders of the village as well as by groups of dancers and players of musical instruments. These pillars are not explicitly referred to as belonging to Indra but the context suggests that this is the case. Furthermore, five statues of gods are displayed under temporary shelters during the festival. Though all of them do not clearly represent Indra, they are called *Indra Maharaj* by the villagers. Interestingly, this festival is not only linked with general prosperity and good crops, but also with power.<sup>30</sup> It legitimizes the authority of the elders of Pyangaon and is associated with the mythical creation of the village. In my opinion, we have here a local counterpart of what is being celebrated in Kathmandu City during the same period.

### Indra, the Thief-God

Let us return to the royal festival of Kathmandu. At the feet of Indra's pole of Hanuman Dhoka is placed a small iron cage in which Indra, mounted on his elephant and facing west, is represented with his arms out-stretched, bound with ropes as a sign of captivity. This statue is worshipped daily in the morning and evening by a Parbatiya Brahman appointed by the Narayan Hiti Palace. Presently, this charge belongs to a Satyal family from Thamel (Kathmandu). The priest also makes daily offerings to the Aṣṭa Mātrikā goddesses and the Aṣṭa Bhairava. These gods are represented by eight small posts which are stuck around the ceremonial pole just after his erection on the first day of the festival.<sup>31</sup> They are believed to guard Indra. A Putuwār (a specific Newar caste of low status) from *Pulāngu Guhyeśvarī*, near Balaju, keeps watch over the Indra statue for the eight days of the festival and takes all the daily offerings made by the people of Indra: mainly rice, barley and sesame seeds (New: *hāmvaḥ*).<sup>32</sup> This man, called *dyah pālā*, "the guard of the god", has to offer oil lamps twice a day to Indra. In exchange, he receives daily some rice, saffron and mustard oil from the Guthi Samsthan office.

Normally, a Kusle (an impure Newar caste, formerly Kanphata Yogi ascetics) musician is also supposed to come and play oboe daily at the feet of Indra's pole. But I never saw him in 1992. Apparently, this custom is vanishing.

On the first day of or a day before the festival groups of Jyāpu farmers set out in the streets four other images of Indra represented in the same way. The god is seated in the lotus position, his arms raised stiffly sideways at the shoulders parallel to the ground, with the palms of his hands facing up. These images are displayed (New. *indra bvayegu*) in Indrachok (Wāghah), Maru, Kilagal and Nardevi on small raised shelters called *vimāna* ("divine or aerial cart") in Sanskrit and *bhikhāchē* in Newari.<sup>33</sup> The statues are disposed in wooden structures refertoed to as *indra khat* "chariots of Indra". Raised high on four carved posts, the shelter of *Maru tol* is supported by four carved wooden elephants. All the images normally face west, so that Indra can see *Indra Daha*, the pond from which, as we will see later, his mother left the valley of Nepal (= Kathmandu) long ago. A Rājopādhyāya Brahman is attached to the statue of Wāghah, but Vajrācārya Buddhist priests are the *pūjārī* for the three other Indra. The *nitya pūjā*, however, are performed by Jyapu caretakers. The main day for the worship of these Indra is the day of the full moon.<sup>34</sup> Buddhist women offer lamps of one hundred and eight lit wicks to Indra on behalf of the recently deceased, and Hindus throw the protective sacred thread (*rakṣabandha*) tied around their wrist under the raised sheds on which the images of Indra are housed. A concluding ceremony, *visarjana pūjā*, takes place on the fifth of the dark half of Asvin. For this ceremony, Jyāpus from the neighbourhood offer rice-cakes called *yaḥmari* in Newari to all the directions of the universe. Then the *vimana* are dismantled and the statues of Indra are taken back to private houses or temples.<sup>35</sup> In Wāghah, the image is first brought to a Rājopādhyāya Brahman who purifies it. In this *tol* Indra is afterward introduced in a procession with music into the *Ākāśa Bhairava* temple where he stays throughout the year. Aside from the period of the Indra Jātrā, the king of the gods is generally ignored by the public.

Indra images displayed during this eight-day festival are apparently unique to the Kathmandu Valley.<sup>36</sup> As represented here, Indra is a thief-god, *khūdyah*, publicly disgraced for stealing flowers from a garden in Kathmandu. This is explained in a local myth of which several versions exist. According to that legend, the king of the gods went one day to the Kathmandu Valley to gather the flowers of the *pārijāt* tree (*Nyctanthes arbro-tristis*, Lin), a variety of *jasmine*, for his mother. Indra descended into the Valley hidden in a cloud. Unfortunately, a Kathmandu peasant (or a gardener) surprised him at the moment he was stealing the flowers in Maruhiti tol. The god was taken prisoner in front of the *Ākāśa Bhairava*



temple, in Wagah, and exposed to the eyes of the population for seven days, his arms tied to a pole. On the eighth day, Indra's mother, worried about the absence of her son, also went to Kathmandu. The king realized his error and proposed to Indra to release him on two conditions: that the god come back to the capital every year to be exhibited as a prisoner and that he provide the peasants sufficient fog and dew in winter for the crops to mature. Indra accepted. He was venerated by the crowd; then he and his mother mounted on the white elephant *Airāvata*, at Kilagal and left the inhabitants of Kathmandu near the temple of Nardevi (Neta Maru Ajimā) constructed at the western limits of the city.<sup>37</sup>

Some elements of the Indra Jātrā are linked to this legend. For instance, the four statues of Indra which are displayed in the streets during the festival are located in the different *ṭols* (quarters) mentioned in the myth. Secondly, two farmers from Kilagal carry at night an effigy of Indra's elephant made from cane and covered with a painted cloth. Accompanied by musicians, the elephant rushes about everywhere searching for its master. Lastly, on the fourth day of the festival, there is a funeral procession which refers to a Buddhist version of the myth. According to this version, Indra's mother (= Vasundharā) came to Kathmandu disguised as a demoness (*Dāgī*, from *Ḍākinī*), to search for her son.<sup>38</sup> When she found him in the palace bound up like a thief, she promised to ensure mist and dew for the winter crops in exchange for his release. She also promised to lead the inhabitants of Kathmandu to heaven to meet their deceased relatives. They followed her when she departed with Indra. But when they reached the top of the hill from which they were to ascend to heaven, she informed them that they could not enter heaven without first bathing in a pond known as *Indra Daha* (= Yamki Dā in Newari) to purify themselves. While they were bathing in the pond, they were enveloped by a thick mist. Taking advantage of this, she escaped to heaven with Indra.

Accordingly, on the fourth day of Indra festival, recently bereaved Buddhist Newar families circumambulate the city of Kathmandu following a Jyapu farmer from Tyengah possessed by Dagi (New.: *dāgī vanigu* or *cāḥsiyā*). This man wears a white mask representing the mother of Indra and is guided by two attendants. He starts as soon as the Kumari's chariot is driven back to Hanuman Dhoka following its circle in the lower section of Kathmandu. The procession begins and ends at Lakphal or Maru Cvasapakha (Maru Tol), near Kasthamandap, where the Dagi mask is kept in a Tuladhar's house. It is led by a Jyapu group from Maru Tol holding *dhunya* bamboo poles decorated with yak tails and playing *dhimay* drums. This procession follows the route of the Kumārī's chariot at a rapid pace, first in the lower part of the city, then in the upper part. It is said that visually the route draws the figure of a sword

in the streets of Kathmandu, remembering that king Gunakamadeva founded the city on the model of the Kali's sword. The circumambulation of the city is performed in order to reach heaven in the Dagi's footsteps to meet the dead relatives. The families scatter grain by the wayside so that they would not forget the way home. Once finished, they throw what remains of there offerings in a place called Bhuta Satta, near Kasthamandap, and wash their faces in the Maru Hiti fountain. Afterwards, they either return home or go to bathe in Indra's Pond (Yaṃki Dā), which is located on a hill 12 kilometers west of Kathmandu. Some time later, this same night, a few Manandhars rush along this same ritual road carrying a long bamboo structure on which lit candles have been placed. This is called *bau mata* in Newari. These lights are meant to show the way back to those who have lost their way during the preceding procession. The ritual is supposed to transfer the merit acquired by participating in the procession of the recently dead.

Indra thus appears to the inhabitants of Kathmandu as a thief-god, *khudyah*. This is not merely a Nepalese fancy. In the Hindu classical mythology itself, Indra is often described as a thief, especially of *soma*, the ritual plant considered in the Vedic text as a god-king, or of inebriating drinks by which man surpasses himself.<sup>39</sup> Indra also stole the horse which was on the point of being sacrificed during *aśvamedha*, so that the king who performed this ritual could not become his equal.<sup>40</sup> The search for the *pārijāt* flower is also a common theme in Indian literature. Indra is often described quarrelling with Kṛṣṇa for the possession of this plant, which is said to fulfill all wishes.<sup>41</sup> The only difference is that in the Nepalese myth, the *pārijāt* is growing on earth, contrary to Hindu classical myths where this plant is to be found only in heaven.

This local myth clearly puts emphasis on the fertility and prosperity functions of Indra. It is worth noticing that such aspects correspond to some ritual elements performed during the festival. In the village of Pyangaon, for instance, young boys belonging to a traditional youth association (*balmu guthi*) have to steal cucumbers in the garden of the locality during the feast of Indra. These cucumbers are offered to a god called Tusikhūimadyaḥ ("the god who steals cucumber"), perhaps a form of Indra, and represented by a head ornament (*kikimpā*).<sup>42</sup> The ornament in turn is kept concealed under a piece of cloth by the eldest members of the association. No women can approach or see it. On the fourteenth of Bhādra, bright fortnight, this god is worshipped and the cucumbers are taken as *prasād* (returned worship substances) by the young boys. Such rituals are widely shared in Newar villages.<sup>43</sup> Indra is especially revered by the Jyāpu farmers, mostly young people, during Indra Jātrā.

Through all these aspects pertaining to fecundity and vegetation, Indra is linked with kingship and kings. As is widely reported, the Hindu ruler was considered responsible for the general prosperity of his realm. As Indra, he was a rain-maker, associated with the regulation of the meteorological processes as well as other natural forces. Where|there is no king, assert the classical texts, rain will not fall. Generative power was expressly listed among the various manifestations of sovereignty. The ruler was a producer of wealth.<sup>44</sup>

### Conclusions

At this point, four remarks can be made. (1) Indra Jātrā of the Kathmandu Valley is mainly derived from Hindu textual tradition. The local ("folk") aspects of the rituals, such as those observed in the village of Pyangaon, are no less based on themes prevalent in the Hindu high tradition than the central, in other words kingly, ones. (2) Indra is venerated during the festival not only as a Kṣatriya warrior, full of strength and courage, but also as a god of vegetation associated with the general welfare of the kingdom. These two aspects correspond to the dual nature of Hindu kingship: on the one hand, the king's main duty consists in protecting his subjects; but on the other hand, he is also a mediator between man and nature. (3) Consequently, Indra Jātrā is a royal festival in the full sense of the term. It is related to power, prosperity and can be seen as a ritual of renewal of the king's order. A short anecdote taken from a Buddhist Nepalese chronicle is worth quoting in this respect. This chronicle reports, without much detail, that Pratap Malla, a famous king of Kathmandu in the seventeenth century, was once busily engaged in digging a canal in Rani Ban. He stayed a whole year in that place and thus celebrated the Indra Jātrā there, and not in Kathmandu.<sup>45</sup> This indicates that the festival must take place wherever the king is, his presence being essential. The rituals are entirely focused on his person or on his **representative**. (4) This festival performed in honour of the god Indra reflects the ambiguous position of the king in the Hindu world. The ruler is often identified with gods. He is considered, in specific contexts, as a divine figure totally distinct from his subjects. But at the same time, he is dependent on deities and on rituals for his legitimacy. This paradoxical situation obviously springs from the classical conundrum of the relationship between spiritual authority and temporal power in Hindu thought as outlined for instance by J.C. Heesterman.

In closing, few words need to be said about the modern sociological significance of this long established royal ritual. At the beginning of this article, I pointed to the combination of two distinct ethnic heritages Parbatiya (Shah) and Newar in the existing Indra Jātrā, especially in the cult of the

*indrādhvaja*. As shown both these elements explicitly refer to the Indian classical tradition. But this is not the whole story. It is also worth noticing that the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in Nepal in 1990 has not disturbed the performance of the ceremony. The *indrādhva jōthhāna* is celebrated today exactly as it was during the panchayat system when the kings had concentrated nearly all the powers in their hands. This questions the widespread assumption of the political manipulation in the Himalayas<sup>46</sup> here ritual seems of little concern to political events. This unchanging character is not a novelty. As Bert van den Hoek stressed, the royal rituals (coronation, court ceremonials and funerals) survived the virtual seclusion of the kings in the country during the Rana period, when the Rana Prime Ministers were the de facto hereditary rulers of Nepal.<sup>47</sup> It must be recalled, however, that the first democratic regime in Nepal in 1951 adopted some measures to secularize Indra Jātrā. Thus, the Home Minister B.P. Koirala abolished "the system of compulsory attendance of civil servants at Hanuman Dhoka at night during Indra Jātrā festival" and "the system of compulsory assembly of all the military officers at the time of raising the *linga* at Hanuman Dhoka".<sup>48</sup> Notably enough, nobody from the government attended the pole-raising ceremony in 1992. Clearly, two theories of legitimation are in conflict in close contact: one invests the people with power, the second brings the king with divinities and extends his sovereignty to nearly all aspects of civic life. How will the democratic forces resolve these problems? Will they promote other types of state rituals, as happened in Europe? Will they **emphasize** secularization, reducing royal rituals to a marginal, folkloric affair? Is Nepal ready for a new delimitation of the respective domains of politics and religion? All these questions are of crucial importance for the future of the democratic movement in Nepal.

## Notes

- 1 Cf. David Gellner, *Monk, Householder and priest. Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual* St. John College, Oxford, Ph. D. diss, 1987), 341.
- 2 Dilli R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*. 4 vols, vol. 2, Calcutta: .... K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, 614.
- 3 Lienhard, S. "Problemes du syncretisme religieux au Nepal," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient*, t. 70 (1): 260.
4. Mary Slusser, *Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 198.
5. Gerard Toffin, "The Farmers in the City: The Social and Territorial Organization of the Maharajan of Kathmandu," *The State, the Law and*

*Administration in Classical India*, edited by B. Kölver (Münich, in press)

6. Ethnographical data were collected from 1970 to 1992 thanks to missions granted by the National Center for Scientific Research (C.N.R.S., France). Fieldwork was carried out especially in the Jyapu (Maharjan) communities of Maru, Wāghah, Wotu Tols (Kathmandu) and of Pyangaon Village. In Kathmandu, I received much information from Tej Ratna Tamrakar (present *hakim* of Hanuman Dhoka), Prem Narayan Manandhar and Punya Ratna Vajracharya. Thanks are also due to Krishna Prasad Rimal, Sushila Manandhar and Corneille Jest.
7. A useful description of the pole-raising ceremony is to be found in Chapter 10 of Rajendra Pradhan, *Domestic and Cosmic Rrituals Among the Hindu Newar of Kathmandu, Nepal* Ph.D., diss Delhi University, Delhi 1988.
8. Ibid., p. 391.
9. Gautam Vajracharya, *Hanumandhoka Rajadurbar* (Hanuman dhoka Royal Palace) (Kirtipur: Tribhuvan University Press, 1967) 170.
10. Cf. Rajendra Pradhan, *op. cit.*, p. 391. Since 1985, the Manandhars of Chyasādo (Kathmandu) are also invited to the ceremony by the Guthi Samsthan.
11. It is the same sword as that used at the sword exchange ceremony (New: *khadga hilegu*) between the king and Pacali Bhairava/Bhadrakali in Makhā Tol during Durga Puja.
12. Cf. Rajendra Pradhan, *op. cit.*, p. 399.
13. A. Bake, "Quelqueséâtre indien," in *Les Théâtres d'Asie* (Paris: Editions du C.N.R.S., 1961), 46. By the same author: "*Ein Indradhvajotthana in Nepal*," *Indologen-Tagung 1959* Göttingen: E. Waldschmidt, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 116-121.
14. Quoted by Odette Vienhot, *Le Culte de l'arbre dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954) 93. Cf. also J.J. Meyer, *Trilogie altindischer Mächte und Feste der Vegetation*, 3th part, 6-26.
15. Interestingly, the sala tree is not given in this list.
16. O. Viennot, *op. cit.* p. 94. Other references to Sanskrit texts are available in P.V. Kane, *History of the Dharmasastra* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institue 2(2): 824-827.
17. O. Viennot, *op. cit.* pp. 94-95.
18. J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), 74-75; idem, "The Indra Festival According to the Atharvavedins," *Journal of the Amercian Oriental Society* (1967) 87: 414-429.
19. J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, 76.

20. Ibid., p. 76
21. Ibid., p. 73
22. Cf. A.W. Macdonald & A. Vergati-Stahl, *Newar Art* (London: Warminster, Aris & Phillips Ltd. 1979, 112-113.
23. This ritual was also abolished in 1951 by Home Minister B.P. Koirala; cf H.N. Agrawal, *The Administrative System of Nepal from Tradition to Modernity* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976) 159.
24. N. Gutschow, "Kathandu: historical Development, Spatial Structure, Social and Ritual Topography," in *Kathmandu City "Khumbu Himal"* 13 (3) 250. (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 1979) for the Indian tradition, see also F.B.J. Kuiper, *Ancient Indian cosmology* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983) 13 241-246.
25. Quoted by R. Pradhan, *op. cit.*, p. 392.
26. Cf. *An Introduction to Hanuman Dhoka* (Kirtipur: INAS, Tribhuvan University Press, 1975), 20. Indra is here represented with his arms raised stiffly sideways (cf. infra) Photo in M. Slusser, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, fig. 442.
27. Cf. G.C. Tripathi, "Das Indradhvaja-Fest in Orissa," in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, supplement III, (Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977) 2: 1002-1014. In that case, the *indradhvaja* festival is performed in the Jagannatha temple of Puri.
28. J. Gonda, "The Indra Festival According to the Atharvavedins", *op. cit.*, 1967.
29. P. Mahapatra, "Tree-Symbol worship in Bengal", in *Tree-symbol worship in India*, ed. S.S. Gupta (Calcutta: Indian Publications, 1965), 133.
30. G. Toffin, "L'Indra jâtrâ à Pyangaon; essai sur une fête néwar de la vallée de Kathmandou," *L'Ethnographie*, vol. 76, no. 1(1978): 109-137
31. We have here a clear cosmological image of the universe. The pole of Indra, linked with the king, stands for the center of the world, and the Mātrkās symbolize the eight cardinal directions. In this way, the capital of the kingdom is transformed into a microcosm of the cosmos.
32. Indra never receives blood-sacrifices in the Kathmandu Valley. It should also be mentioned that a gold-plated copper statue of Visvarupa is displayed at the same time just in front of the Police Station, 20 meters west of the Kal Bhairava of Hanuman Dhoka. This statue is usually housed in the Mulcok of Hanuman Dhoka. Its main priest is the Karmacarya *pujari* of Taleju temple. Visvarupa is here regarded as the universal form of Indra.
33. The *Thakujaju*, descendants of the former Malla royal family, also display a statue of Indra in Thāhiti every six years.

34. Cf. R. Pradhan, *op.cit.* p. 389.
35. In Maru, the statue of Indra is kept throughout the year in the local Asok Vinayak temple just nearby the Kasthamndap. *Nitya puja* is done by the Jyapus in charge of this temple. But the offerings are just made to the door of the room in which Indra is kept, not to the statue itself.
36. As M. Slusser rightly observes: "Of particular interest in the history of Indian religion, whereas in India Indra's cult seems to have survived only to the tenth century, it is exactly from then that images of Indra begin to be abundant in Nepal" *Nepal Mandala*, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
37. M. Slusser, *Op.cit.*, pp. 276-268, and R. Pradhan, *op. cit.* pp. 291-395. See also R. Levy, *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 458. Cf. also D. Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Priest* *op. cit.*, 1987, p. 573.
38. Cf. D. Gellner, *op. cit.*, p 573.
39. See for instance G. Dumézil, *La religion romain archaïque* (Paris: Payot, 1965), 196.
40. W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology* 1982; reprint, (Calcutta: Rupa & Co. 1973) 463.
41. See, among others, W.J. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 60, O. Viennot, *op. cit.*, pp. 79 and 96, and M. Slusser, *op. cit.*, p. 267, note 1.
42. Another god, specific to the Newars, *Nasahdyah*, requires ~~stolen~~ offerings. Young Jyapu boys studying music have to steal a chicken or male goat and sacrifice it to Nasahdyah. For Bhaktapur, see G. Wegner, *The dhimaybaja of Bhaktapur* (Wiesbaden: Kommissions verlag, Franz Steiner, 1986) 14-15.
43. In Theco Village (Lalitpur District), for instance, farmers erect five to six poles shaped like a cross during Indra Jatra. These poles represent *Tusikhuimadyah* (= Indra) and are worshipped especially on the full-moon day. Such poles in the form of cross are also erected in some quarters of Kathmandu City (Thamel, Tebahal, etc.) during the festival of Indra.
44. A strange ceremony is performed around Indrachok (= Kathmandu) on the night of the last of the Indra Jatra. According to M. Anderson, who is the only author to mention it, "A small wooden puppet is brought from the confines of Hanuman Dhoka and used as a weapon to strike small puppets placed behind the images of Indra"; cf. *The Festivals of Nepal* (London: G. Allen & Unwind Ltd., 1975), 137. According to one Jyapu informant of Indrachok, three puppets, called *jhyalica* (New.), are concerned. This ceremony which I could not watch, remains to be explained.

45. D. Wright, *History of Nepal* (Calcutta: Ranjan Press, 1966) 145.
46. Cf. A. W. Macdonald, "Remarks of the Manipulation of Power and Authority in the High Himalayas," *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 12 no. 1 (1987): 3-16. and G. Toffin, "L'usage politique du mythe au Népal. Une lecture ethno-his-torique du dieu matsyendranath," *Annales ESC*, no. 4 (1990): 951-974
47. Bert van den Hoek, "Does Divinity Protect the King? Ritual and Politics in Nepal," *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, (1990): 149.
48. H.N. Agrawal, *The Administrative System of Nepal from Tradition to Modernity* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976), 159.



# **AN APPROACH TO HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING IN NEPAL THE CASE OF NEPAL CIVIL SERVICE**

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This report presents an approach to Human Resource Planning in Nepal — the Case of Nepal Civil Service prepared under UN/DESD Project # NEP /88/034, Strengthening Institutional Capabilities of the Ministry of General Administration. It highlights issues in Human Resource Planning in Nepal and provides an approach towards building a human resource plan for the country. As a case illustration, the report focuses on the Nepal Civil Service — its environment and current situation, programming action areas, and monitoring and evaluation of its human resource system.

## **Introduction**

Human Resource Planning is a strategy for building, acquiring, utilising, improving and retaining a nation's human resources. It is a multi-disciplinary exercise; the economists who are primarily instrumental in the formulation of a state's development plans have the know-how on the operation of the labour market at the macro and sectorial levels; the statisticians have developed models of manpower analysis and forecasting; and the management scientists have professional capabilities to understand the behaviour of the various groups, and the management, motivation and development of human resource at all levels. Human Resource Planning has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions; human resource is an asset; it has to be optimally created and effectively managed.

Traditionally, planning in any field has been the prerogative of economists and statisticians; but to ensure a holistic, pragmatic and implementation oriented planning, management professionals, particularly those specialising in organisation behaviour and personnel management, effectively contribute

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to economists and statisticians thinking by enabling them to appreciate cultural, institutional, managerial and behavioural constraints in planning. The problems of planning are not in the logic of the plan but in its implementation and effective management. Human Resource Asset management is more important for a nation than just creation of assets. Good theoretical models do not necessarily ensure effective implementation; human resource planning ensures that there is trained, competent and committed manpower available to implement the national plans effectively.

Human resource differs from land and capital; technology and finances; it is unpredictable, in the sense that it is capable of exercising individual judgement and "freely" determining the course of its actions. And more importantly, untapped and under-utilised human resource has moral, social and political implications well beyond those of idle land, capital or technology. In a limited sense, human resource planning is closely related to the efficiency and effectiveness of the nation and its organisations and institutions. It may, however, be pointed out that efficiency and effectiveness not inherent in assets, they are a consequence of good Human Resource Planning, Management and Development. The need for Human Resource Planning arises from many facets of a developing nation. It is unrealistic to assume that skilled, competent and motivated manpower will be freely available in developing the country. Therefore there has to be concerted effort to generate an optimum profile of manpower through educational planning or appropriate training programmes (setting aside time) for their development. Human Resource Planning helps create an organisational climate for competence, commitment and performance and prevent the need for suddenly dismissing employees, which is not easy. Overmaning can be avoided through Human Resource Planning, and excess manpower can be dealt with by retraining, voluntary redundancy schemes, exploiting opportunities provided by the natural wastage, etc. This may minimise the social problems caused by a large number of employees being off-loaded suddenly.

The need to establish optimum recruitment levels and numbers of promotions, anticipate redundancies, avoid unnecessary dismissals, allow for proper training and development for updating knowledge, skills and attitude needed for improving efficiency argues well for developing a national human resources plan.

It may be said at the outset that human resource planning has both Quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Economists and Statisticians who deal with quantitative dimensions have yet to develop tools for exact forecasts, as such forecast is rarely achieved in practice. Human beings display a commendable resistance to predictability. A plan provides a general trend and helps identify potential trouble spots. Human Resource Planning is

a continuous process, not only at national level but also at sectoral, organisational levels. It influences the sectoral organisational strategy and is in turn influenced by it. A strategy based on sudden expansion, e.g., in the energy sector, may be revised in the light of the existing trained human resources available in this field. Or the availability of a large unutilised pool of engineering personnel may call for increasing the targets in the related fields of development.

In order to formulate HRP for any nation, one would require to answer the following questions.

### **1. Data/Information**

Do we have sufficient data to facilitate HRP? Both qualitative and quantitative information must be available and it must be up to date and accurate (as far as possible). In most countries, sector, occupation and organisation-wise information is collected in decennial census or sample surveys; some have built Computerised Human Resource Information System (HURMIS).

### **2. Interface/Communication**

Do we have an open channel of communication among policy makers, planners and client groups? A Human Resource Planner must be able to communicate with the policy makers and administrators, and be familiar with the quality and orientation of the human resource in the particular sector or occupational groups. He must have skills to interpret the goals of the policy makers and the capabilities of the existing manpower in sectors or organisations to each other. Communication at all levels of the government or organisation is vital, much of the success in human resource planning in the Civil Service (UK/Canada, e.g.) has been due to the full involvement of the employee-organisations concerned. Otherwise the human resource planner in a government works in ivory tower isolation as a hired academic.

### **3. Multi-Disciplinary Approach**

Are we able to set up a multi-disciplinary group? In today's world, no problem is unidisciplinary; it calls for a multi-pronged approach. In HRP, the assistance of economists, sociologists, behavioural scientists and Training and Development Experts must be added to the expertise of personnel and human resource management. The HRP team should include or have access to people with these skills and the team must be structured in such a way that necessary cooperation among them is forthcoming.

#### **4. On-going Exercise**

Can we set up a cell on HRD planning which will treat it as an on-going exercise? None of the above conditions can be met overnight; with the fast changing policy and socio-economic environment in which most developing countries operate, HRP has to be a continuous process rather than something which is carried out and abandoned. With a good HURMIS and effective communication at all levels, potential HRP problems should be detected at an early stage to allow for the initiation of corrective **measures**. HRP should not be a five yearly exercise; it should also not be a fire-fighting exercise (i.e., when an emergency arises or a cut-back exercise is undertaken); it should be a continuous activity supporting all developmental and administrative activities.

#### **5. Linkage with National Plan**

Is it possible to tie up HRP with national planning? HRP would be meaningful only if the national plan is tied to specific data and well-defined, clear and measurable objectives. It is always helpful if earlier plans and their findings are recycled in the formulation of the next plan. Wherever the plan is specific enough the HRD plan can be developed to enable the country to recruit or train the human resources needed to accomplish specific objectives.

#### **HRD Planning for Nepal**

Nepal is a land locked country between china (North) and India (South, East and West) covering an area of 147,181 sq. Kms; 885 Kms.long East to West and on an average 183 kms. North to South. Two-thirds of the total area is occupied by hills and mountains; about 18 percent of land is arable; including settlement and roads. Its population as of the 1991 census is 18.46 million; and the population growth is 2.08 percent per annum. Nepal has three ecological regions: the mountains inhabited by 1.4 million people (08%), the hills with 8.4 million people (45%), and the plains with 8.6 million population (47%). The male and female population is 9.2 million each. About 10 percent of the population live in urban areas.

Though Nepal is predominantly an agricultural country, the contribution of agriculture to the GDP has gradually decreased to 56 percent. Agriculture accounts for about 75 percent of export and it absorbs 90 percent of the work force. Due to extreme climatic variations and uneven topography ranging from world's highest mountain, 8,848 meters, to near sea-level in the plains, only 18 percent of the county's total land area is under cultivation. The plains account for 57 percent of this cultivated area.

Ninety percent of the working population is involved in agriculture; only 10 percent is absorbed in other occupations. The 1991 census states that out

of total the 12.7 million population over 10 years of age 7.2 million, i.e. 65 percent, is economically active. This group is occupationally classified as follows:

|                                |         |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| Professional/Technical Workers | 13,171  |
| Administrative Workers         | 2,119   |
| Clerical                       | 7,913   |
| Sales                          | 21,599  |
| Service Workers                | 33,972  |
| Farm and Fisheries             | 575,823 |
| Production/Labour Workers      | 31,671  |
| Others                         | 25,119  |
| Occupation not stated          | 5,819   |

The above occupational classification, not segmented for planning purposes, is yet to be fully processed.

There are 5.9 million literate (35%) citizens in Nepal, of which 1.7 million have had no schooling, 2.3 million up to primary level, 1.25 million at secondary level 280 thousand with SLC, 120 thousand intermediate, 73 thousand graduates, 15 thousand postgraduates and equivalent qualification. Details of technical education are yet to be processed. However, National Planning Commission sources believe that over 500 Engineering and 200 medical doctors were unemployed or under-employed in 1990.

Nepal has recently released the plan document which outlines basic directions, thrusts and priorities of the 8th plan, 1992-97. This is the first plan of the democratic government after the political changes in 1990. The plan stipulates the following priorities for national development:

- Macro Economic Stabilisation
- Agriculture Intensification and Diversification
- Development of Rural Infrastructures
- Reduction in Population Growth
- Industry and Tourism
- Export Promotion and Diversification
- Energy Development
- Human Resource Development and Employment
- Public Administration Reform

It identifies agriculture, industry and tourism as areas of high comparative advantage for the nation. Also, comparative advantage exists in areas where low-cost hydro-power and other natural resources can be used in production

processes, e.g., energy intensive industries or irrigated agriculture. According to plan, the main approach to 8th plan will be based on infusion of improved technology and adoption of institutional innovations, and improvements in public administration through appropriate reforms which will make it equal to the tasks of the country's development challenge.

Human Resource Planning in Nepal is in a nascent stage; it is yet to fulfill the basic conditions for effective planning:

- Basic Data on Existing Profile of Human Resource.
- Interface Communication on HRP; there are no specialised HRP Units in sectoral ministries; even in National Planning Commission a small group of three-executives is responsible for this activity. And each Ministry makes forecasts on the basis of insights rather than hard core data.
- A multi-disciplinary approach is yet to evolve; the dialogue between Departmental Administrators, Personnel Executives and the Planning Commission is rarely held around HRP issues.
- Need for HRP as a continuing exercise is yet to be established. The five year plan omits human resource issues even where sectoral development strategies are well articulated.

In the light of the above, Human Resource Planning is an uphill task. It must, however, be stated that in the past, respective sectoral ministries have attempted to forecast manpower needs based on plan statements which give generic directions. It appears that there are guess estimates based on insights and experience. The question, e.g., how many of what types of personnel and what skills would the country need in the various sectors of the economy over next 5 to 10 years can hardly be answered in the absence of detailed skill-wise supply or demand statistics. Moreover, this has also to be linked to the needs, knowledge and skills required in different fields because of fast changing economic and technological environment in the country. HRP requires long-range and short-range analysis, sectoral analysis based on plan objectives and technology forecasts, and above all formulation of alternative strategies for human resource development.

Human Resource Planning (HRP) is a four stage process:

### **1. What is the Objective, How will HRP contribute to it?**

This requires scanning external environment, government policy, and societal expectations. Also one needs to analyse strategic objectives, expected technological changes and given financial boundaries. These would help establish human resource objectives, performance parameters, costs, compliance, employee behaviour, competence and **and commitment.**

## **2. Where are we now?**

This requires assessment of current human resources available, SWOT analysis, existing personnel policies and functions, selection and recruitment, wages and perks, career progression and promotion; training, development and placement, and match between employee competence and jobs. In other words, assess how effectively the government is currently utilising its human resources in the light of anticipated future demands.

## **3. How do we reach desired objective?**

Generate and evaluate human resource programmes and action, HR Profile required, gaps in existing resources, development of alternatives designed to improve Human Resources, retraining and development, or retirement; promotion versus lateral entry; placement policy, culture building or performance and productivity, communication and compliance; problem solving strategies etc.

## **4. How did we do?**

Monitor and evaluate human resource performance, continuous review, on-line planning and updating. Establish a Human Resource Planning and Monitoring Unit which continuously assesses whether the actions initiated accomplished human resource objectives set earlier and monitor any new problems that may have surfaced.

### **The Nepal Civil Service**

In the above context, the following pages present an approach to Human Resource Planning in Nepal, with particular reference to Nepal Civil Service, a sector which is receiving considerable attention from the democratic government.

Human Resource Planning in the Civil Service is a process by which the government could determine how the civil service should move from its current position to its desired position.

The answer to this question (the desired position) requires establishing human resource objectives that are consistent with the strategies and objectives of the democratic government and its administrative functioning. Human Resource Planning will help the government to make certain that human resource decisions are tailored to the stated objectives.

The approach paper to the 8th plan states:

*"... In spite of the huge investments made in the economy in the past 35 years, Nepal remains one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world ..."*

*"... A low savings rate, heavy dependence on external assistance, a low export base, a low level of industrialisation, vulnerability in agriculture production, high population growth etc. are constraints the country presently faces in its quest for sound and sustained development."*

*"... The control oriented approach of the past ..... counter productive bureaucratic behaviour (has) tended to discourage private and community initiative. Slow decisions and delayed disbursement of funds have increased overhead costs, resulted in under-utilisation of the administrative capacity ....."*

*".... In-efficient public enterprise ..... In-efficient investment portfolio have contributed high cost-economy"*

*Above all "in-efficient public administration .... has reduced the Government's institutional ability to implement development programmes effectively and efficiently. The civil service is large, under utilised and lacking in motivation. It is a major source of the fiscal problem. The archaic administrative and financial structures and over centralisation resulting in inadequate authority and flexibility at the field level are also problems ....."*

The above quotes from the 8th plan approach document succinctly highlight the need for a new planning strategy and, more particularly, the need for human resource planning in the civil service itself. In a democratic society, civil service is an important instrument for management of development; its competence, commitment, its orientation and attitude, its optimal and appropriate utilisation remain a major challenge for any Government, more so in Nepal.

### **Environment of Civil Service**

Nepal, with a subsistence economy where agriculture contributes to nearly 57 percent of GDP and population grows unabated between 2.07 to 2.66 percent (during last decade), is one of the least developed countries, with a per capita income of around US \$ 160. With the advent of democracy, the Government has realised that its important agenda is to free the economy from state control and to create conditions for the economy to perform. The 8th plan is geared towards these goals. However, the plan's success will depend on the management capabilities of the civil service for which appropriate human resource planning and development strategy must be vigorously pursued. Reorganisation of Government, and slimming and



making the civil service efficient, effective and committed are real challenges to the Government. An earlier survey had indicated that the civil service needs a human resource system where jobs are clearly described, authority delegated where action is, number of levels to be reduced, personnel rules -- career progression, training and development, transfer and placement, wages and benefits -- to be reviewed.

The 8th plan expects to reduce poverty, create jobs for jobless, and focus on rural development. This requires a profile of civil service which is responsive to the poor; a civil service which is district driven, not rooted in the national capital, as it is now. The pious hope of most civil servants today is to be based in Kathmandu.

With the advent of democracy, citizens' expectations are rising and restlessness and new-found freedom of expression, are throwing new challenges to the civil service. Likewise, a civil servant has to discover a new equation with political executives drawn from various segments of the Nepalese Society. The Nepal Civil Service has been drawn predominantly from the upper castes and the elites of the Kathmandu valley. Of late, employment in the civil service has become possible for others from the hills and the terai plains. The new composition will call for new mores and work ethic, where civil service will not only be expected to perform but maintain the freedom, sovereignty and integrity of the nation.

As Nepal is been a land-locked country, not surprisingly its civil service has long been insulated from external influences. However, with the development of a communication system within the country and outside, networking of air services to different parts of the world, opening of the country to tourists and trekkers, encouragement to foreign trade, etc., Nepal has joined the globalisation process. During recent decades, the country has also witnessed industrialisation in selected areas and wide use of computers in Government. In the coming years, with its liberalisation policy, Nepal will be expected to promote inflow of technology in the field of agricultural production, housing and health, environment and water resources management; this technology will demand new ways of functioning in the civil service. Already with the assistance of UN/DESD, the Government is building a computerised HURMIS which will provide updated information on every civil servant: personnel data, age, sex, marital status, religion, qualifications and accomplishments, date, place and post of original appointment and subsequent transfers ministries and departments, performance evaluation, and promotion; in-service training in Nepal and abroad, job classification and description, training needs identified, salary and benefits, retirement and pension entitlement. The HURMIS would be a valuable database for the Nepal Civil Service; the information generated will

help the matching of positions with persons; prepare promotion lists, vacancy reports, recruitment and replacement, equity monitoring etc. so essential for effective Human Resource Planning in the Civil Service. It would, however, require continuous flow and updating of information to make the system useful. While the Nepal Civil Service will benefit by this, there may also be resistance from those who would like to move ahead by cutting corners, through favours and subjective assessment. Use of new technology is likely to change the job environment of the Nepal Civil Service -- this should be welcome!

### **Human Resource Objectives**

The human resource objectives for the civil service are derived from several sources: changing environment strategic plans for national development, current employee work-behaviour, and the nature of work and performance expected. The 8th five year plan of Nepal clearly states administrative reform as a major instrument for development; the Prime Minister's policy statement in Parliament and the Public, in civil service institutions and management forum, underlines the need to:

1. upgrade the civil service for improved efficiency in public service.
2. motivate the performers and off-load those who are "marginal performers; streamline civil service personnel administration, and
3. enhance the managerial skills of the civil service through systematic training and development.

The 8th plan envisages a civil service which will:

1. be decentralised and accountable delegating decision making authority to implement policy to the relevant levels in public administration,
2. facilitate development initiatives at the community level; encourage NGOs to work in specific areas and sectors,
3. change its role of "excessive intervention and control" to a facilitative role through following actions:
  - a. streamline and simplify the administrative process so that private initiatives are not thwarted,
  - b. design and execute a clearly defined set of policies, and
  - c. eliminate red tape so that Government decisions are not delayed.

It has proposed-

- a. Restructuring of Public Service: number of government employees does not exceed the actual need of the work being performed;
- b. Develop performance oriented culture; to meet service delivery objectives: communicate national priorities and expectations from each of the civil service jobs; and

- c. Improve human resource management so that government employees are motivated to improve performance.

### Assessing Current Situation

The third step in the human resource planning process is to analyse the current personnel situation.

In the Nepal Civil Service, there are two categories of civil servants: permanent and temporary. While some statistical data are available on permanent staff, there is no centralised record of temporary employees. Every Ministry or Department maintains its own temporary roll. It has been estimated that nearly 30 per cent of civil servants in Nepal are temporary, project tied; some of them have been working with the government for over a quarter century. Any exercise without including this vast number will be deficient and incomplete.

As of July 1992, Nepal Civil Service has 100,632 permanent employees of which 10,727 are Gazetted executives; 62,909 Non-Gazetted supervisors and assistants, and 27,096 belonging to categories such as Peons, Sweepers, and non-skilled employees.

The following table summarises the existing strength Ministry-wise.

| Ministries                        | Gazetted | Non-Gazetted | Others |
|-----------------------------------|----------|--------------|--------|
| Cabinet Secretariat               | 697      | 1290         | 411    |
| Finance                           | 657      | 3983         | 1460   |
| Supply                            | 27       | 32           | 10     |
| Home                              | 834      | 2855         | 790    |
| Industry                          | 382      | 984          | 283    |
| Law, Justice and<br>Parliamentary | 400      | 2819         | 1217   |
| Agriculture                       | 1281     | 6401         | 1897   |
| Housing and Physical<br>Planning  | 337      | 2297         | 1777   |
| Water Resources                   | 798      | 2720         | 895    |
| Works and Transport               | 693      | 2983         | 818    |
| Local Development                 | 262      | 4825         | 106    |
| Foreign Affairs                   | 100      | 164          | 98     |
| Tourism                           | 315      | 625          | 321    |
| Land and Management               | 339      | 5459         | 1624   |
| Defence                           | 16       | 105          | 16     |
| Forest and Environment            | 687      | 6146         | 2054   |
| Commerce                          | 54       | 111          | 37     |

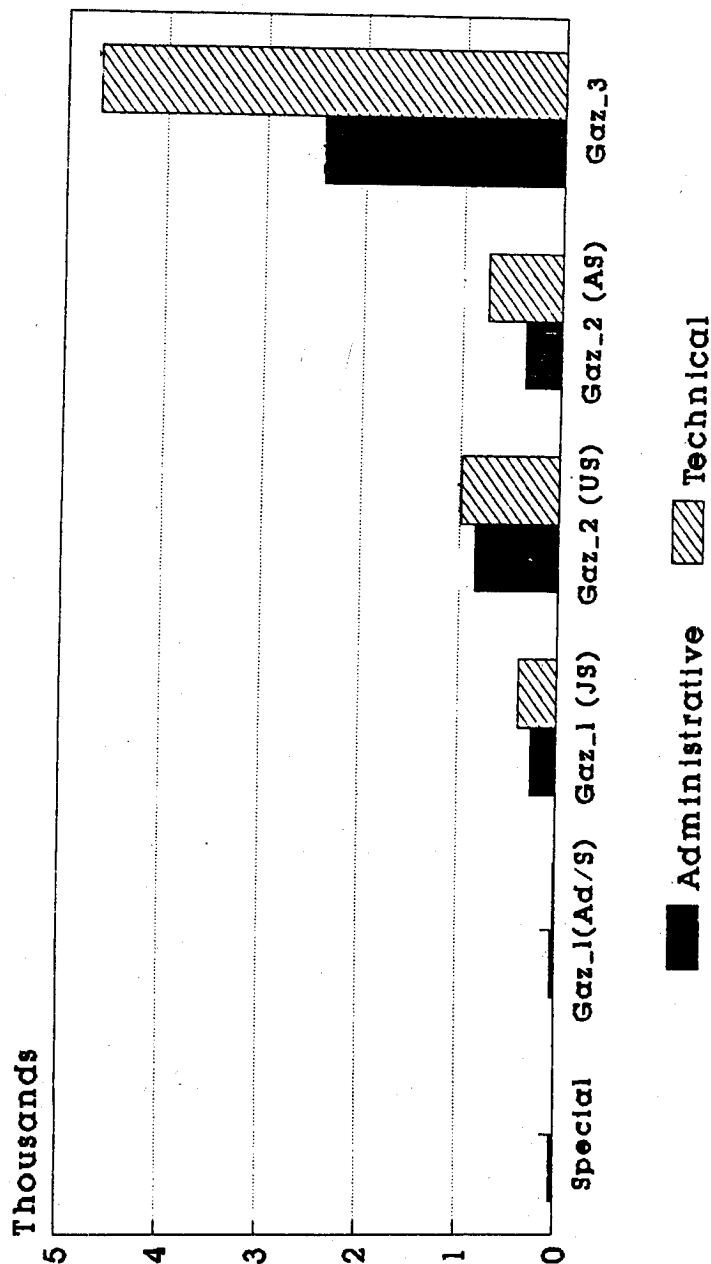
|                        |              |              |              |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Labour                 | 46           | 115          | 106          |
| General Administration | 69           | 176          | 37           |
| Communication          | 276          | 3073         | 7622         |
| Health                 | 1360         | 12699        | 4029         |
| Education and Culture  | 1097         | 2957         | 1488         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>           | <b>10727</b> | <b>62819</b> | <b>27096</b> |

The Civil Servants are further classified into Generalist Services and Technical Services. The latter includes anyone with professional qualification in Engineering, Medical, Agriculture, Lecture, etc.; the details of which are to be collected from different Government, Departments and Ministries.

The following table presents the data, grade-wise. There are 6 grades among Gazetted officers, 4 among Non-Gazetted and 3 constitute other grades.

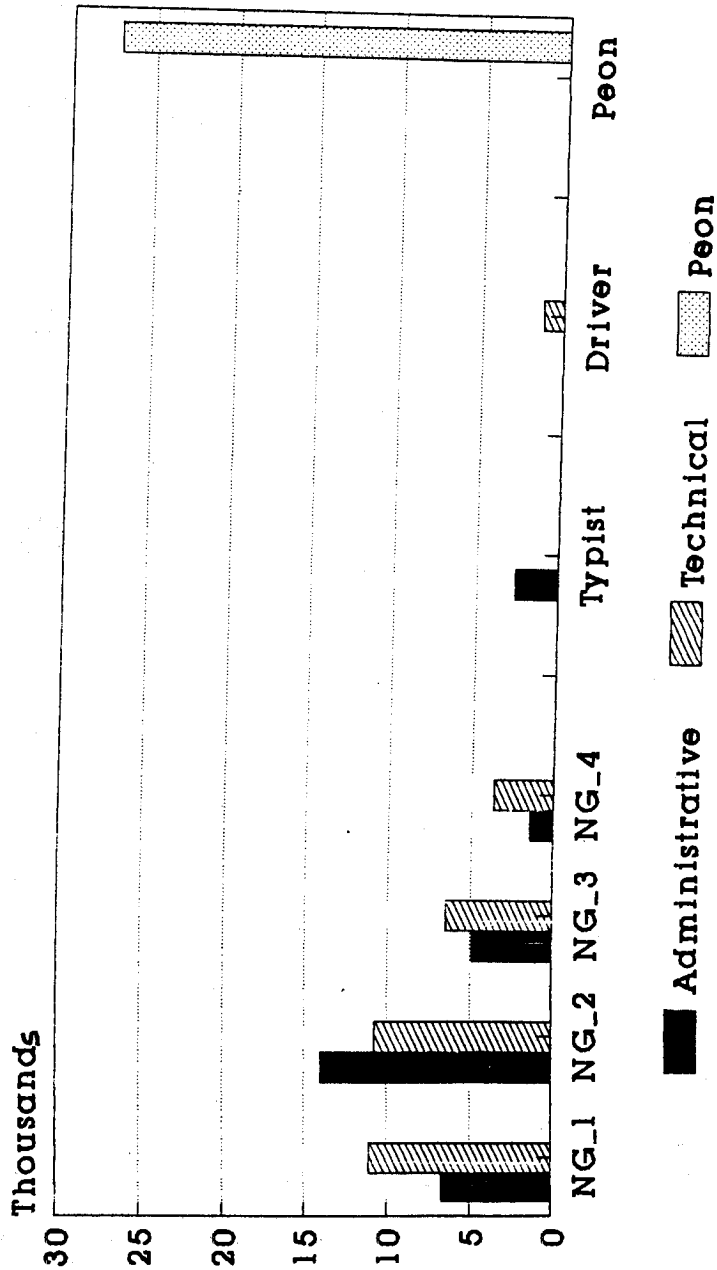
| Level                  | Administration | Technical    | Total         |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Selection Class        | 41             | 1            | 42            |
| Gazetted Class I       |                |              |               |
| * Additional Secretary | 31             | 11           | 42            |
| * Joint Secretary      | 245            | 379          | 624           |
| Gazetted Class II      |                |              |               |
| * Under Secretary      | 842            | 991          | 1833          |
| * Assistant Secretary  | 364            | 745          | 1109          |
| Gazetted Class III     | 2411           | 4666         | 7077          |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>       | <b>3934</b>    | <b>6793</b>  | <b>10727</b>  |
| Non-Gazetted Class I   | 6707           | 11046        | 17753         |
| Non-Gazetted Class II  | 13990          | 10745        | 24735         |
| Non-Gazetted Class III | 4870           | 6488         | 11358         |
| Non-Gazetted Class IV  | 1417           | 3629         | 5046          |
| Typist                 | 2650           | -            | 2650          |
| Driver                 | -              | 1267         | 1267          |
| Peon                   | 27096          | -            | 27096         |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>       | <b>56730</b>   | <b>33175</b> | <b>89905</b>  |
| <b>Grand Total</b>     | <b>60664</b>   | <b>39968</b> | <b>100632</b> |

# Existing Permanent Positions of Civil Servants (By Grade Levels) 2047/48 B.S.



• GAZ - Gazetted

# Existing Permanent Positions of Civil Servants (By Grade Levels) 2047/48 B.S.



NG = Non-Gazetted

The Nepal Civil Service is divided into eleven occupational groups, four of which are non-technical and seven technical. This division is presently under review by the Administrative Reforms Commission, and it is likely that specialised services for Revenue, Accounts, Post and Foreign Service may be created in the near future.

The existing occupational groups include Administrative Service, Legislative Service, Audit Service, Judicial Service, Agriculture Service, Education Service, Engineering Service, Forest Service, Health Service, Statistical Service and Miscellaneous Service. Each of the above services include Gazetted and Non-Gazetted class. There are four levels in Gazetted class: Selection (Secretary), First Class (Additional and Joint Secretary), Second Class (Under Secretary and Assistant Secretary) and Third Class, which is the entry grade for graduates in the civil service. As no lateral entry is permitted in the Gazetted class, every graduate has to enter as Gazetted class III Officer.

In the Non-Gazetted class, University degree is not required for entry. It has 4 grades, viz., Non-Gazetted 1 to 4. Here lateral entry is permitted, depending upon the qualifications of the employee.

Although there is provision for promotion from Non-Gazetted to Gazetted class, only a few make it. Non-Gazetted technical personnel with prescribed qualification can move to Gazetted level.

There is a large number, nearly 30 per cent of civil servants, who belong to the other category of manual workers, messengers, sweepers, peons, etc.

### **Forecasting Manpower**

Although Nepal has had seven five-year plans; none of these have given any attention to manpower demands and supply in any sector of the economy or services.

The decennial census 1991 has statistics on the following occupational groups, such as, Administrative Workers, Clerical Workers, and Service Workers.

No further segmentation of professional/administrative workers is available for any meaningful analysis. Recently the Government has decided on a blanket formula to terminate temporary employees and reduce the rest by an agreed percentage. If manpower demand, in each sectoral field, based on development plans, was available, these exercises could be undertaken rationally and systematically. If HURMIS is extended to temporary employees as well, Nepal would have basic data for such analysis. (As of now, there is no centralised information on natural wastage or employees returning in the coming years. I was told that several cases of employees working beyond superannuation dates had recently surfaced.)

Currently, the **Human Resource Management** activity in Nepal is performed by three agencies of the Government:

**The Public Service Commission** is responsible for recruitment, and promotion; and as an appellate authority on disciplinary control, transfer and posting;

**The Ministry of General Administration (MGA)** facilitates formulation of civil service policy and is responsible for position management, manpower budgeting, job classification, remuneration and fringe benefits. It maintains statistics and Personnel Records and is developing a Human Resource Management Information System for the Nepal Civil Service. It is responsible for appointments, placement, promotion, transfer and disciplinary control of Administrative Service, Statistics Service and Miscellaneous Service. MGA is responsible for administrative reforms, extension of O&M Services to Ministries, and ensuring Training and Development of all civil servants; and

**The Ministry Concerned** is responsible for the appointment of employees such as Peons and messengers; and also of Non-Gazetted staff recommended by Public Service Commission. Each Ministry handles the promotions, disciplinary control and posting of Non-Gazetted and technical officers. Each Ministry makes project-tied and temporary appointments.

To ensure effective Human Resource Planning and Management, the above three agencies need to have either a continuous coordinating mechanism or there should be clarity of roles and functions, not only in theory but in practice.

### **Job Analysis**

There are nearly 1700 job titles in the Nepal Civil Service. A group of tasks performed by one person makes up a position; identical positions make a **job**; and broadly similar jobs combine into an occupation. There have been attempts to list jobs and make occupational groupings in the Nepal Civil Service but these are not in use.

To facilitate Human Resource Management and Planning it is necessary that job analysis should lead to **job descriptions and job specifications**. Several years ago job descriptions were prepared, but these are yet to be accepted and implemented. There has to be acceptance of minimum skills,



knowledge and abilities required to perform the job.

The above analysis and job description are necessary prerequisites for organisation structuring, systems and methods improvement and human resource planning -- particularly manpower planning, recruitment, selection, employee relations, compensation, performance evaluation, training and development.

Manpower planning identifies the future profiles of the employees, compares those needs with the present workforce and determines Quality and Quantity; the numbers and types to be recruited or terminated are based on the country's strategies and objectives. HRP is possible if one knows how many additional persons for a particular job, with stipulated qualifications, are required. Information on vacancies, wastage and retirement, occupation and level-wise is necessary for effective planning. Unfortunately, this is not available for the Nepal Civil Service.

Recruitment is effectively done if one knows of what level with what qualification and in what number additional hands are required. If lateral entry is not possible from outside or inside, the question of recruitment has to be addressed. In the Nepal civil Service the ratio between those promoted and those recruited is 1:3.

An effective system of performance evaluation not only helps in identifying those who need reward, punishment, opportunity for training and development but also for promotion to higher levels.

Human Resource Planning also requires information on compensation, comparative data from similar economies and institutions, and from employers in other sectors of the country. If the civil service is an important instrument for national development, it must receive an appropriate compensation package. Researches have shown that inadequate compensation is a source of demotivation although the reverse may not be true.

### **Motivation of Civil Service**

Motivation of the civil Service is often a result of factors not under direct control of the Government; e.g., perception of equity, recognition by colleagues, or the reward given by the supervisor. The superior is the most important source of motivation. He guides, mentors and helps to meet performance standards and ensures that the job assigned is within the employees capability and control. In civil service, hierarchy is sacrosanct, the superior provides modelling behaviour; if superiors are not setting up examples, the subordinates would seldom excel them. A study undertaken by the Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC) has identified morale and motivation as key areas for civil service reform. The traditional approach, that superiors can have liberties, come and go as they please, above the norms

which subordinates must follow, does not work in a democratic society. The subordinates will contravene norms and have low morale if they are asked to follow a feudal mode in modern bureaucracy.

### **Personnel Issues**

Another study undertaken by UN/DESD project has highlighted the following issues in personnel administration system in the Nepal Civil Service. (Nti, 1991)

1. Apparent decentralisation, but in reality centralisation of major personnel decisions, such as appointment, promotion, disciplinary control (p. 38) with the Public Service Commission.
2. Ministry of General Administration responsible for personnel functions such as size of civil service, classification of jobs, staff development determining salary and benefits, posting of administrative services personnel, but in reality MGA is marginalised. (p. 40)
3. Civil servants believe that MGA is the hub of personnel function -- this is not so.
4. The Civil service is seen as competent but non performing, corruptible because of low wages and over-manned, guzzling nearly 70 per cent of budgeted revenue.
5. Performance Appraisal and Promotion System lack objectivity and cause low morale.
6. Training and placement, and qualifications and posting have no relation, leading to waste development efforts.

The above delineates the existing human resource situation in the Nepal Civil Service.

### **Human Resource Programming: an Approach**

The current issues confronting the Nepal Civil Service, identified in the last section, are in no sense unique. Both developing and developed countries face common problems: need for better efficiency and effectiveness, need to refine job analysis, job classification and performance evaluation systems; need to improve personnel administration -- move from centralised to decentralised operations; a shortage of high quality, competent and committed managerial and technical personnel; need for continuous training and retraining for professional development, etc. The only issue unique to the Nepal Civil Service is the shared perception that it is over-manned; and over-manning is the cause of low human resource utilisation. In the absence of hard core data for manpower analysis, this remains a perception although it is a fact that a large chunk of state revenue (nearly 70%) goes for payment of civil service wages.

Although in civil service human resource planning problems are common to many countries, developing and developed (AMDISA, 1991) the solutions are not common. Solutions have to be contextual and country specific. There has to be, however, a shared assumption that human resources are assets; to create, to deploy efficiently and effectively and to manage for results is an entrepreneurial and managerial task. In managerial parlance, one does not blame assets for their under-utilisation and low performance; it is the management which has to examine its policy, plans and strategic options.

Human Resource Planning calls for strategic analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative. I would only briefly touch the Quantitative part and focus my attention to Qualitative analysis.

### **Human Resource need Analysis and Forecast**

It is difficult, if not impossible, to undertake quantitative analysis of civil service manpower in Nepal. Although MGA is the Central Personnel Agency and National Planning Commission sets plan priorities on which manpower demand and supply are matched, country lacks a centralised civil service human resource information system. In its absence, it can only be a hypothesis, based on observation of work-behaviour in the Nepal Civil Service, that it is over-manned. Even if data validation proves this to be true, it would be safe to assume that over-manning would not be uniform in all the sectors of the civil service. The Law of Average does not work in development administration; if agriculture or health is a priority, it will require a different manpower strength than industry or forest; likewise, a non-priority sector would have to make do with a smaller civil service. If liberalisation and reduction of control is the stated national policy, there is need to reduce the large manpower in Departments which deal with control functions. Besides building a human resource database for quantitative analysis, there is a need for a human resource audit in all the sectors to determine the optimal size of the civil service. Perhaps one can begin with a zero-base exercise in all the Ministries, Departments and District Administration. It may be worthwhile to have a human resource management audit done by those competent professionals who do not belong to the civil service or do not work for a particular Department or Ministries. This may ensure objectivity. Under the present UN/DESD Project, the MGA has already carried out a management audit; this did not question, however, why a particular activity came under MGA, but only how it could be streamlined (Sanders, 1992). An O & M specialist, statistician or planning expert could foot the bill for such an exercise. Forecasting human resource demands in various sectors, based on plan projections, is a different exercise, best undertaken by the National Planning Commission.

### **Action Areas**

Recent studies in the public and private sectors have established that the human resource must be treated as an asset rather than a cost. This has wide ranging implications for human resource planning, development and management in civil service organisations.

Firstly, it would mean that existing manpower must be assessed to determine current needs and future demands. The priority has to be on better utilisation of the existing civil service than a cutback exercise -- which is naturally tempting in an adverse economic situation or when the performance of existing civil service is unsatisfactory. I would argue that enhancing the capabilities of existing civil service is more essential for development administration than reducing it without systematic analysis of existing sectoral manpower and individual performance of civil servants. Uniform reduction across ministries and departments is likely to create mismatch in the foreseeable future. It is therefore important to plan qualitative improvement in human resources:

how adaptability, innovation and performance can be progressively improved through HRD Programme to cope with the pace of socio-political economic and technological change as also to meet individual development needs of civil servants.

The following paragraphs attempt to deal with the above issues in the context of the Nepal Civil Service.

### **Policy Clarity**

The basic policy on human resource planning should emerge from the philosophy that human resources in the civil service are assets not costs. They should add value and not be treated as creating a liability to be disposed of. It is also necessary to recognise that human beings are psychological assets, whose productivity increases or declines depending on whether they are motivated or demoralised by their work environment (Pradhan, 1990). If the Government accepts the above assumptions regarding the strategic importance of the human resource planning and management, much greater priority will be placed on HRD, i.e., improvement of the work environment, work organisation, the job and the individual.

### **Training and Development**

While in traditional bureaucracy an individual is a cog in the wheel - he does not have his own identity except that of the job and the Government - in HRD planning, an individual is dynamic. His competence contributes to

organisational strength, his technical and managerial skills and positive attitude help organisations move towards the desired direction. Education prepares him for a job; training enables him to improve his job performance; and development contributes to his professional growth. HRD must be rooted in thorough Training Needs Analysis (TNA). While annual performance appraisal, properly done, identifies individual training needs, TNA may identify job related needs. A massive TNA survey of over 1,500 Chiefs of District Offices in Nepal has been recently completed by the author under UN/DESD Project. Its findings, which will help design appropriate training programme for District Chiefs, should hopefully make training relevant and useful for improving their performance on the job.

Human Resource Planning calls for systematic training need analysis at the individual, job, and organisation levels; this will in turn facilitate comprehensive HRD Programmes for resource development. Training in Nepal, not unlike in other developing countries, is being done for training-sake. This must give way to a need based, well designed, participant-oriented, organisation driven, human resource development programme.

### **Role and Responsibility of Operating Departments**

In asset building activity, HRD should not be viewed as peripheral to departmental goal. As the Workshop for Heads of Civil Service Training Institutions in Nepal which was held in February, 1992, recommended, the responsibility for HRD must squarely rest with the line managers, the departmental heads. Unless this is done, the human resource will not be seen as asset and training will not be viewed as an investment in departmental capability building. There is a need to place a right value onto the asset building HRD exercise.

### **Human Resource Information System**

HRD planning is much wider than just a training and development programme. Human Resource capability building requires an effective human resource system; its most important element is the Human Resource Management Information System (HURMIS). In the yesteryears, record keeping (*Kitabhkhana*) was an important function; today, with technological advances, record keepers make updated information available at the finger tip, which is essential for operational and strategic decision making. Without HURMIS, it is almost impossible to know the kinds of manpower available, needs, and our training, development or recruitment needs. Luckily, sophisticated computer-based systems have been developed which can process a vast quantity of human resource and personnel data for operational decision and performance improvement.

### **Coordination among HRM Agencies**

In Nepal, as stated earlier, there are three agencies which deal with human resource planning and management -- PSC, MGA and the concerned Ministry. A strategic approach would necessarily focus responsibility for human resource management in Government. Firstly, there should be inter-agency role clarity - what one should do which other agencies should not - and a degree of coordination which presently does not exist. Human Resource Management which is fragmented in the three different agencies may be unified by creating a central agency, in the Prime Minister's Office, where major policies are formulated, systematic programmes are planned and their implementation monitored.

### **Administrative Reforms Commission**

In HRP, although quality of the human resource is important, the job profile, job challenge and job matching are also critical; the management systems and organisation capability building are also essential. The Administrative Reform Commission has already looked at the following:

Recruitment, Selection System,  
Training and Development System,  
Performance Appraisal System, and  
Promotion System.

Hopefully these will contribute to effective Human Resource Planning. effective linkage between training and placement is important. Ensuring Career Planning is possible only if there are Specialised Cadres in the civil service. In this age of fast changing knowledge and specialisation, the Nepal Civil Service needs to build specialist cadres.

While there may be some merit in rotating jobs for building an all round perspective in the beginning or towards the end of a civil service career, there is a global recognition that in the fast changing world civil servants also need to specialise.

### **Organisation Development**

Cross-cultural comparisons of civil service have long suggested the systemic relationship between civil service and the society in which it is embedded. Civil Service mirrors the values and ideologies of the society. America's pluralistic model of political democracy stands in stark contrast to Japan's cooperative, cooptive model of joint business, labour and government planning; and also to Sweden's participative ownership and administration. Nepal, like most developing nations, is caught between traditionalism and

modernity and is still searching for a model which mirrors some of the values it has prized in the past and others which will enable it to join the modern world. The ability to design a new culture for the Nepal Civil Service is surely constrained by its societal context. The democratic government has already articulated some of the values it would like the civil service to imbibe. These include:

*People centred, performance driven, efficient and effective  
in delivering administrative services to the society.*

During the recent decade, there have been several experiments to create a new culture in the civil service (Sinha, 1988), and many attempts to build corporate cultures with the help of process based OD intervention. Where these have succeeded, they have largely depended on the charismatic leadership in the Government or corporate organisation. Cultural change begins from the top; planned cultural change calls for long range intervention that is systematically designed, using behavioural science technologies. In Nepal, the Administrative Reforms Commission has agreed to initiate this process by designing a one week retreat for Political Executives, Ministers and the Public Administrators, and the top civil servants of the country. Perhaps, this will pave the way for planned cultural change in Nepal Civil Service. The Prime Minister has himself stated some of the goals and values of the civil service. For effective human resource planning, it is imperative that the civil service focuses on building its new organisational culture. A culture is one of the major determinants of human behaviour, cultural change will bring change in the civil service work behaviour. There is a need for strategic thinking on this; perhaps the proposed retreat or a Workshop would help in this direction.

Strategic options inevitably lead to structural redesign - for example the location of the human resource planning responsibilities, what to centralise and what to decentralise: Decentralisation refers to a management strategy of giving separate Ministries or Departmental Units the responsibility to design and implement their own human resource system. This contrasts with a centralised strategy that locates all Human Resource Planning and Management responsibility in a single agency. As stated earlier, although Nepal lacks a central human resource management/personnel agency and three different agencies are responsible for various tasks, in practice the major personnel decisions are centralised. In the light of the HR issues identified earlier, it may be worthwhile to centralise HR policy formulation, monitoring and control, and decentralise other aspects of human resource management to operating line Departments. Pushing these responsibilities

close to the departments and the civil servants affected by them may help ensure that decisions are related to the Department/Ministry's objectives. This would also make the departments accountable for the performance, training and development of their employees.

A civil service, located nationwide, though operating under Departmental umbrellas, can hardly afford different human resource management systems. This is likely to cause dissonance. The answer to these and related problems of decentralisation can be found in developing a set of civil service - wide principles or guidelines that must be upheld by all. However, a decentralised unit could permit different norms if these could be shown to be:

Job related,  
Sector related,  
Acceptable to all,  
Cost effective, and  
Able to withstand legal challenge.

The human resource system is one of many management systems used in the Government. Therefore, it must be congruent with these other systems. Decentralisation of the human resource system without decentralisation in other aspects of Government may even work at cross-purposes. Structural change, consequently, has to be across all sectors of the Government. In Nepal, fortunately, this is being explored.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluating the impact of human resource plan implementation is an important phase of the HRD process. Some of the questions which need to be addressed by evaluation are:

1. What is the perceived value of human resource planning and other related activities among various constituents of the civil service?
2. What is the extent to which human resource forecasts, plans, and actions are being followed by different Ministries/Departments or agencies of the Government?
3. How much are the HRD activities in tune with civil service problems and opportunities? Are the priorities sound?
4. What is the quality of relationship within an agency and across agencies with which it interfaces?
5. How is the civil service culture responding to changed strategies and structure; what is the quality of communication within the civil service?



### Concluding Observations and Summary

The above paper on Human Resource Planning in Nepal is based on the assumption that human resources are assets, and that these have to be dealt with as such. HRP is considered as a strategy for building, acquiring, utilising, improving and retaining a nation's human capabilities. It requires a multi-disciplinary approach; and it has both quantitative, statistical and qualitative, and behavioural dimensions. In order to formulate HRP for a nation, sector, organisation or department, one has to build:

Data/Information Base,  
System of Interface Communication among Policy Makers,  
Planners and Operating Units,  
Multi-disciplinary Team,  
Continuous Exercise, and  
Linkage with National Development Plan.

The biggest constraint on HRP in Nepal is the absence of data/information base. Unless this receives due attention, any Human Resource Planning Exercise will be of limited value. With the help of UN/DESD, steps to build Human Resource Information in the Civil Service sector has been initiated by the Ministry of General Administration, but this has to be done for all sectors of the economy and society. Also, the National Planning commission needs to translate its priorities and objectives of the 8th plan into estimated manpower projections in different sectors.

This paper, therefore, has a limited objective. It suggests an approach to Human Resource Planning and addresses itself to HRP in the Nepal Civil Service. The 8th Plan approach paper states that civil service reform is an important priority for the plan implementation. It then examines the changing environment of the Nepal Civil Service - both national and global and evolves human resource planning objectives for the civil service. A assessment of the existing human resources in the civil service is made, based, however, on inadequate and incomplete data. As far as temporary, project-tied civil servants are concerned, no relevant data is available. Detailed data on occupational groups is also non-existent. Although no quantitative attempt has been made on civil service manpower projections, the Government's decision to reduce civil service manpower is examined.

Qualitatively, the report focuses on: the need to review management structure of the civil service; systems of Job Analysis, Job Description and Job Specifications; Recruitment Selection, Training, Performance Appraisal and Promotion systems; comparative compensation data from similar economies; motivation and other personnel issue which impede the Nepal

Civil Service. And, finally it suggests an approach to HRP:

Human Resource Data-Base,  
Human Resource Need Analysis and Forecast,  
Action Areas: Policy Clarity,  
Training and Development: Individual, Job and Department,  
Role and Responsibility of Operating Departments,  
Human Resource Information System,  
Coordination among HRD Agencies,  
ARC Recommendations,  
Organisation Development -  
    Culture Building-Retreat  
    Decentralisation and Centralisation  
and,  
Monitoring and Evaluation of HRP.

The issues in HRP in the Nepal Civil Service are not unique. Most developing as well as developed countries experience similar issues and challenges. While the issues are similar, their solutions have to be different, rooted in the national plan, policy, strategy, structure, culture and environment of the civil service. Nepal needs to build a human resource database and system for its continuous updating before any meaningful HRP exercise is undertaken. This report generates action areas for consideration for HRP in the Nepal Civil Service.

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# **SAGARMATHA (MT. EVEREST) NATIONAL PARK: CONSERVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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## **Introduction**

In general, the purpose behind establishing national parks is preservation of indigenous plants and animals, and historical places- the biotic environment and cultural heritage. Although priorities may differ in space and time, safeguarding such valuable national assets demands that specific areas be permanently set aside or at least temporarily restricted from human interference so that natural resources are not relentlessly depleted through irrational use by humans.

The aim of this paper is to qualitatively review the past and present situation of Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) in terms of conservation of natural resources and analyze the problems in managing it. Major constraints and their solutions to promote ecologically sustainable development of the park and its people are also proposed.

## **Sagarmatha National Park**

Sagarmatha National Park is a sprawling region of 1248 Sq. Km. which shares its northern frontier with Tibet and includes Mt. Everest, the highest peak in the world, of course, and several other world-famous peaks. The park was established in 1976 with the prospective view of preserving unique fragile mountain ecosystem and indigenous Sherpa culture for years to come (Mishra 1973; Jefferies 1982). Moreover, promoting and ensuring the tourism industry in this highest land of the world was another important part of the park policy (Mishra 1973).

Sagarmatha National Park with its spectacular scenery of unique physiographical features and varied flora and fauna together with the cultural heritage has attracted people from all over the world. Because of its unique

natural and cultural features, UNESCO, in 1980, acting upon the Nepalese Government's proposal, designated Sagarmatha National Park as a World Heritage site under the world heritage Convention in order to prevent natural and cultural degradation.

### **A Brief Historical Review**

**Political and economical transformations.** In 1947, Nepal opened its borders to foreigners. Initially, Nepalese government gave permission to scientific and mountaineering expeditions to visit the Nepalese Himalayas (Bjorness 1983). The number of tourists has increased continuously since then, especially after 1965 (SNP 1984; NPC 1991). Today, more than 10,000 tourists visit Sagarmatha National Park each year.

The Sherpas of Khumbu, who has always managed to adjust themselves according to the changing environment, shifted their trade-based economy slowly to a tourist-based economy (Haimendorf 1975). The need to make this change was mainly due to the following factors: (a) political change both at home and abroad. Tibet became an autonomous region of People's Republic of China in 1959, and the international frontiers were closed. This affected the trade between Nepal and Tibet and consequently the economy of the Khumbu area itself (Haimendorf 1964), (b) an overwhelming inflow of tourists who started entering the Sagarmatha National Park (NPC 1991).

The Sherpas managed to manipulate these changes in their favor not only because of their own qualities but also because of the sequence of the external and internal changes which turned out in their favor. Gurung (1979) puts it this way, 'The Sherpas would have faced the economic plight of similar trading communities in other Himalayan ranges, but the opening of Khumbu for tourists preceded the closure of the Tibet trade by a decade'. After the closure of the trade with Tibet in 1959, tourism which was in its infancy at that time, has proven to be a windfall for the Sherpas who have monopolized the trekking, mountaineering, and other services related to tourism which brought new economic wealth to the region (Fisher 1978; Pradhan 1981). Most of the Sherpas are involved in these businesses, having abandoned subsistence agriculture, trade, and other less lucrative occupations.

**Population dynamics.** According to Haimendorf (1975), there were 169 households in 1836 compared to 596 households (2205 people) in 1957. According to Lang (1970) the population of Khumbu was 2761, whereas in 1978 it was only 2474 (Fisher 1978). However, the population and the household numbers increased to 2929 and 638 respectively in 1979 (Sherpa 1979). According to the Village Panchayat records of Khumjung and Namche, there were 645 households in 1982/83. At present, the population

of the park is about 2500. These figures, which include the immigrants from Tibet and the lower regions, show that the natural growth of the Khumbu population has remained very low. However, a rapid increase of external population has substantially modified the once healthy environment: the indigenous culture and the fragile Himalayan ecosystem (e.g. Bjornness 1983).

### Conservation Practices Before And After 1950s

The Sherpas of Khumbu practiced a very efficient and effective traditional way of conservation of nature for centuries. They maintained a very strict discipline of preserving forests and encouraged local participation in an ancient, but effective form of community cooperation. They realized the importance of conservation and cultivated the spirit of community welfare. Every village of Khumbu appointed two local officials known as *Naua* (literal meaning as guards) to control the use of the village lands and to prevent community disorder (Haimendorf 1964). *Shingo-naua*, an indigenous traditional forest guard, was elected unanimously by all the villagers to keep watch over the local community forests. He was a powerful person with authority over the forest area, whose duty was to enforce the unwritten laws of forest preservation. People were not allowed to collect green wood freely in those days. Those who needed timber for construction or an additional amount of firewood for some special purposes, such as construction of houses, had to get a permission from *Shingo-naua* who could fine a defaulter (Sherpa, K.C., personal communication). Firewood and timber were abundantly available, since the forests of Khumbu were well preserved and self-sustaining. The people successful in achieving a sustainable balance between the needs of the local people for fuel, construction material, poles for fences and the capacity of the natural environment to provide these local requirements. *Osho-naua*, the guard of agricultural lands functioned to control the land use pattern in a parallel manner to *Shingo naua*. Thus, the delicate ecological balance, regenerative capacity, biotic potentiality, and biodiversity were maintained. Conservation practices among the Sherpas were a part of the Buddhist belief system (Haimendorf 1975) and can be seen as bottom-up approaches (Hough and Sherpa 1989).

This tradition of the high Himalayas proved less effective after the nationalization of forests for the following reasons. First, this top-down approach represented by nationalization polarized interests of the government and the local people who deemed that the forests now belonged to the government rather than to them (Forestry Plan 1978, 1988; Bjornness 1983). Secondly, most Sherpas diverted to tourist-oriented jobs. Thirdly, Chinese action in Tibet brought a large number of refugees into Khumbu, which

made it even more difficult for the Sherpas to preserve their traditional laws effectively. After the establishment of the national park, the situation of local conservation practices was further aggravated and for sometime *Shingo-naua* in practice did not exist. However, Phortse, a village which is off the trekking route never gave up the traditional methods, so the forests in its vicinity are well maintained. Forest, an ecological complex, preserves the water-catchment area, thereby reducing the soil erosion which affects the stability of ecosystems. Moreover, it also promotes recreational, aesthetic, and scientific values.

### **Major Constraints and Solutions**

There are some problems in managing the park, a proposed international biosphere. Lack of education, alternatives, and understanding are the major constraints in such conservation programs (Basnet, in press a). The park could neither gain the local support nor enforce the rules and regulations. For instance, most of the tourists entering the park are not self-sufficient in energy. A functionless kerosene depot at Jorsale, the entrance gate of the park, was just a burden for taxpayers.

1. **Education.** Promotion of education should be of high priority as it may play multiple roles in the success of the long-term programs such as conservation. Both formal and informal education must be an integral part of the planning and management.
2. **Ownership.** Primarily, an agreement between the landowners and the officials of the park is most desirable. In retaining their rights, the landowners must agree with certain conditions affecting land use and management. There must be mutual cooperation between the local people and the authorities of the park (Basnet, in press a). The main objectives of the park and its policy should be explained and discussed with local people who are the beneficiaries.
3. **Preserving traditional approach.** The traditional method of forest and land conservation should be revived. This could alleviate many of the problems of conservation (e.g. Basnet, in press a). *Shingo-naua* has been restarted in some places through the financial support from Himalayan Trust (F. Kharel, personal communication).
4. **Alternative technology.** Lack of alternative energy sources has compelled the locals and tourists to depend completely on the dwindling forests for their energy. The subsistence balance between the people's

needs and the capacity of local natural resources to meet the demand is in jeopardy. The innovation of alternative energy sources, like solar and wind energy and mini-hydroelectricity plants, is imperative for the Sagarmatha National Park as deforestation is related to the consumption of energy (Basnet 1986, in press b).

5. **Research.** Basic research, one of the objectives of any national park, should be facilitated to explore natural phenomenon. It will not only provide the insight of the actual problems for planning and implementing programs but also open up a new horizon of sustainable development-partnership among scientists, planners, and managers who work with real grass root people. Research, however, must be of high quality, appropriately designed to test the existing/new hypotheses. Most of the studies, including big projects financed by reliable international agencies, were just of a survey type (see Byers 1987). What is worse is that one cannot find reports of such studies in Nepal. Some research areas include an ecological assessment of land use pattern, carrying capacity of the local environment in terms of energy, food, fuel, livestock, and causes of deforestation (Basnet, in press c; Stern. 1983).
6. **Legal options.** Inappropriate activities, e.g. collecting and selling green wood, should be discouraged. The enforcement of the park rules and regulations is essential. All tourists should be self-sufficient in energy. Safeguarding measures should be taken unless people begin to morally support the program.

### Conclusions

Sagarmatha National Park, a biospheric reserve, demonstrates all kinds of interactions and demands an integrated approach for sustainable development which needs long-term planning. Absolute and immediate solutions to problems of such dimensions are rare. Reducing the problems to a bearable limit by tackling component problems of whole ecological complex may be the best solution.

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## RESEARCH NOTE

# UNSUCCESSFUL CASES IN THE WOMEN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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### Introduction

The Women Development Programme (WDP) was introduced into various villages of Nepal in 1981 (2038-39 V.S.) under the Small Farmer Development Programme (SFDP). In the fifth year of its implementations, the donor agencies evaluated the impact of this project. I was engaged in this evaluation project to write case studies based on field observation through the Centre For Women and Development (CWD) in 1986. I studied four different villages, including the pre-test at Buddhanilkantha Village Panchayat in Kathmandu.

The WDP sounds interesting, and it seems that it should be helpful in promoting the living standard of small farmers. WDP engages women among the small farmer community in various income generating activities. According to its aims and objects, it tries to utilize women power in cottage industries, poultry farming, animal husbandry, bee keeping, needlework and so on. It provides various kinds of training to the women in order to bring awareness in health, modern treatment, sanitation, and modern technology. The programme mainly focused on raising individual incomes by using local resources and making the women self supporting. This paper covers three unsuccessful cases in WDP from different district panchayat, which were part of the evaluation project of the WDP under SFDP. They highlight not only the activities of WDP, but also the problems faced by the participants and programmers.

### An Unsuccessful Case of Ananda Ban

**General Introduction of the Site.** Ananda Ban is one of the evaluation sample sites of the Small Farmer Development Programme (SFDP)/Women Development Programme (WDP) in the western Tarai region in Rupandehi

District. There are a lot of people from the various communities who are barely surviving, although Ananda Ban is a productive area. There is lack of any irrigation system, and the SFDP is doing nothing to solve the problems in this regard.

There are not any good markets nearby. Though the main markets Bhairahawa and Butawal are 19 km and 8 km away respectively, the transportation facilities make them easily accessible. There are no daycare centres at the village.

**Case of an Inactive Women Farmer.** Forty-six years old, Mrs. Parniya Tharu was born at the Tikughada Village Panchayat in Purendehi District. She got married when she was 17 years old, and she had 5 daughters and one son during the subsequent 11 years. She came to Ananda Ban (her husband's house) with her husband and elder daughter in 2015 V.S. Nowadays she lives with her husband and youngest daughter, who are 35 and 17 years old, respectively. Her other daughters have married, but her son died at the age of 16, in 2039 V.S.

She has two cottages, one is made of bricks, yellow clay, and wood with tile roof; the another is made of bamboo and yellow clay with a straw roof. Neither cottage has stairs. The tile roofed one has one room. It is used as a sleeping room for her daughter and guests (married daughters and their children), storage and dinning room for the family all in one. It has an open place under the roof called *pindhi*, which is used as a living room. Another cottage has only one room without any doors or windows, set is used as a kitchen for the family and the bedroom for the couple.

The family has a cattle pond nearby the cottages for their domestic animals. There are a dovecote and hennery for their doves and chickens. A square space surrounded by the above mentioned things serves as a courtyard used for drying grains and other things.

Since the family does not own a latrine, they prefer to defecate at the riverside. They also own a radio. Though nobody in the family is well dressed, all of them appear neat and clean. They do not have their own water sources, so they have to use a local hand pump for drinking water.

Mrs. Thapa and her husband both know the importance of education, but they have been unable to send their daughters to the school due to their poverty. Only her late son studied the school and passed class eight. Her husband and the youngest daughter learned to write letters and do simple mathematics (addition and subtraction). She reported that her youngest daughter wants to study, but the family's lean and thin treasury does not provide the means to fulfill her desire.

Nowadays the family has three kinds of income sources:

- (1) **Land.** The family has owned about 7 *kathas* dry land. Last year's production, which was insufficient, is as follows: 16 muries Rice and 8 pathies *lentil* seeds. They also have 3 *kathas* land to cultivate as co-sharer, from which they obtained 7 muries rice last year.
- (2) **Animal husbandry.** They have 2 calves and 3 goats; they can earn Rs. 200/- from selling a goat. They have 3 ducks, one hen with 8 chickens and 3 doves. The doves produce about 8 young fowls every year. Last year they earned about Rs. 115/- from selling doves.
- (3) **Labour in wages.** Since her husbandry production cannot provide sufficient food for their family and household expenditure, all the members have to work as labourers for additional income. From this they have to provide food for 6 months of the year and other household expenditures.

Her husband works as a porter, her daughter and herself work for local restaurants as cook and dishwasher respectively. Sometimes they wash the neighbors' clothes. Often the restaurants where they work provide their meals, so their monthly salaries and her husband's extra income remain for the household expenditures and other expenses—for example, on clothing, medical treatment, festivals, rituals, spices, vegetables, etc.

Though she does not have any individual property, she has complete control over the family property and makes expenditures by herself. She never makes a budget for managing household expenditures, but she reported that last year she spent on average Rs. 20/- a day on food. Other expenses are as follows:

1. Rs. 1,000/- for clothing
2. Rs. 700/- for her own treatment
3. Rs. 128/- for fuel
4. Rs. 1,000/- on festivals and rituals

**Impact of WDP.** In 2038 V.S., the group organizer (GO) of SFDP communicated about WDP from village to village. Thereby Purniya Thapa came to know about the programme. She joined in the group no. 22 as a member in the same year. Her aims of joining in the programme were to get an individual source of income and learn new skills.

Before joining WDP, she could cultivate and weave *dhakee* (basket made out of *choya*). Immediately after she joined the programme, she received five

months training on *dhakees* weaving and needlework provided by WDP in 2039 V.S.

The WDP provided *choya* (raw materials for weaving baskets) worth Rs. 50/- as an interest free loan to each of the members of group no. 22. Then she began to weave beautiful *dhakees*, *tea mats*, and wall hangings. Within 15 days, she finished all the *choya* provided by WDPS, and she gave her products to the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) to sell. She thought that she might earn about Rs. 100/- from her product, but the ADB did not give any remuneration in return. The ADB said that all the earnings were used to repay the loan.

This policy of ADB depressed her. She figured out that ADB is an exploiter of her labour. She began to neglect the skill and programmes provided by ADB. After repaying the loan given with their production, all the group members lost interest in the group activities. They refused to participate in the group meetings. They lost faith in the WDP and refused to obey the group saving rule of WDP. The Women's Group Organizer (WGO) neither visited the group nor tried to convince them. Thus, from its beginning, the programme became inactive. According to the ADB staff, in the year of 2039 V.S. WGO once misplaced all the commodities produced from *choya* by the women farmers, and the office unable to reimburse them. It seems that the carelessness of WGO and WDP is at fault in making its members inactive.

Though the WDP did not provide any market facilities, the local people and hotel managers from Butawal and Bhairahawa came to her door to buy her pigeons and goats. The transportation facilities also make it easy to go to markets.

Before WDP, Mrs. Tharu was primarily occupied with cleaning, cooking, feeding the family, as well as earning by husbandry, cultivation and labour. Nowadays she continues doing the same things. It seems that WDP did not bring any changes in her traditional work pattern and management of day-to-day expenditure. As the head of the family her husband continues to decide most expenditures, for example, purchasing land, to celebrating a wedding ceremony, etc. WDP did not introduce any new technologies or patterns of work, so she was unable to bring any changes in her traditional *chulo* and *nanglo* for cooking and husking grain respectively. She uses sunlight to dry some foodstuffs.

Though she does not receive any training in social activities, she has social consciousness. She helps neighbors by providing free labour. Because they are so poor, the family eats only three times a day. Though she knows about the hospital service, in the case of illness, she firstly calls a shamin (their priest) to find out the cause of illness and drive away the ghosts. Then she

goes to the Butawal Hospital for treatment. She has given DPT. and TT. vaccines to her children.

She has been unable to save individually or in group as instructed by WDP.

### **An Unsuccessful CASE of Chandra Nagar**

**General Introduction of the Site.** Chandra Nagar is a dry village of Bankey district, in the Western Tarai region. This village panchayat is a newly settled area in the district. Generally, we can perceive two types of people among the different communities. One is retired from the army and their families have returned from Burma, India, Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, etc. Since they receive pension, they don't like to work hard. The another type of people are migrants from various places of Nepal with their sorrowful past. They want to work hard to develop their economic status.

This is a good place for farmers because there is a lot of plain land with productive soil. But there is a lack of irrigation facilities and water sources in the area. It seems that SFDP/ADB is also doing nothing to solve any of these problems.

There is a lack of transportation and communication facilities and no nearby markets. The local people have to go to Rupendia (India-Nepal Boarder) or Nepalganj for marketing. Travel to Nepalganj by Sarta (kind of a cart) takes a day,. Walking, using a shortcut (through a forest), takes about 3 hours. From Chandra Nagar Rupedia is just as far away as Nepalganj. Therefore most women farmers can not go alone to the market for selling and buying products. These difficulties create a lot of problems in each and every development programme.

### **Case Study of an Inactive Woman**

Mrs. Mona Thapa Magar is a member of group no. 12 in WDP. Born in Birpur Village Panchayat, Block No. 9. of Bankey District, she is 22 years old. She got married at the age of 17 and has two sons. The elder one is 4 years old and the younger one is only 11 months. Her husband's home is also in the same village panchayat, where she lives with her father-in-law and brother-in-law. Altogether, there are six members in her family. Her husband is in the Indian Army and mostly lives in India.

Her home looks like a cottage made of stone, bamboo and yellow clay with a straw roof with only one ground floor room. She uses the same room for storage, sleeping for herself and her two sons, and dining for the family. There is a *Pindhi* (portico). She uses the *pindhi* as kitchen, tea shop and also bedroom for her brother and father-in-law. The family uses their own

temporary latrine. There is a small shed for their domestic animals about 10 meters away from the house. The family owns a radio with cassette player.

Nobody in the family's dressed well. All of them are very dirty. Both babies are half naked and playing in the dust and with dogs.

She, her husband and brother-in-law have studied at the local secondary school. She would have liked to have continued her study further, but due to her marriage she could not manage it, as she has to look after her household. As she is literate, she is aware of the importance of education. Although she wanted to give higher education to her brother-in-law, he stopped going to school after passing the VIII class, and now he is trying to get a job in the army. But she is determined to give a good education to her little children.

In 2039 V.S. she was elected as Vice President of the Ratna Jyoti Ladies Club. As the vice president of the Club, she has learned to be frank and active. She actively participated in a ladies and women development programme as well as in folk song and local dance competitions. As the vice president of the club, she has received the following training and observation tours provided by the club.

|    | Subject                               | Period   | Year      | Place             |
|----|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1. | Training on the vice president's duty | 5 days   | 2036 V.S. | Local School      |
| 2. | Training in cloth weaving             | 3 months | 2037 V.S. | Nepalganj         |
| 3. | Observation tour                      | 7 days   | 2037 V.S. | Nepalganj & Kath. |

Thus she has learned to be more creative and active, and received some knowledge of modern life, awareness of family planning, scientific health care, hospital services, and so forth.

Her family has four kinds of income sources as follows:

1. **Service.** Her husband is employed by the Indian Army. He annually remits some money to the family and sometimes brings a lot of cloth home them. The money sent by her husband is spent on meeting household and medical expenditures.

2. **Land.** The family's land provides sufficient food for the whole family. They have three and one-half *bighas* of land nearby their cottage. Last year the production was as follows:

- |                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Rice 12 qrts.           | 2. corn 2 qrts.        |
| 3. Oil seed 2 qrts.        | 4. Wheat 6 qrts.       |
| 5. Lentil (Masure) 1 qrts. | 6. Sesame seed 2 qrts. |



7. Green seeds 2 qrts.

8. Lentil (Arahar) 2 qrts.

But they received only a half of the above mentioned total production because the land had been given to another person to cultivate as a co-sharer (adhiyar). In other words, they are not actually small farmers. She owns a small plot for vegetable farming too, which last year produced about 2 kg. of potatoes and other various kinds of vegetables for their daily consumption.

3. **Animal Husbandry.** She has 3 cows and one pig. None of them are productive as they are going to breed in this year.

4. **Tea Shop.** Besides the above mentioned income sources, she has a small tea shop in her cottage. Her brother-in-law helps her look after the shop. Last year she made a profit of Rs 2000/- from the shop. These incomes meet her daily expenses.

To be a small farmer, as defined by the SFDP/WDP, one who can not earn more than Rs 950/- per year and must be engaged in cultivating the land by oneself. Thus we cannot take Mrs. Thapa and her family as a small farmer according to the criteria of SFDP/WDP.

She does not have any individual property, but she controls the family property, keeps all the household income and makes expenditure by herself. She never makes a budget for managing household expenditure, so she does not know how much she spends on food and other things for the family. Yet she recalled that the total amount of Rs 800/- was spent last year on following things:

1. Rs 300/- for treatment of her youngest child
2. Rs 400/- for festival
3. Rs 100/- for fuel. Thus she came from a relatively rich family and had already a lot of skill, awareness and knowledge in various things.

**Impact of SFDP/WDP.** While Mrs. Thapa was at the ladies club as a vice president, she learned about the SFDP through the club members in 2036 V.S. By this means she came to know about WDP also and joined in the group no. 12 as a member in the same year. Her aim of joining this programme was (1) to learn some new skills and (2) to obtain a loan for agricultural development and animal husbandry.

Her assertion that she joined the programme WDP in 2036 V.S. seems wrong, because the WDP was introduced only in 2038/39 V.S. She neglected my cross question about the matter. As the ADB office at Chandra Nagar also did not have any records, in my opinion she might have joined SFDP in

2036 V.S. in the mixed group and only she became a member of WDP after its introduction.

Whatever should be the matter, she joined group no. 12, in which there are eight members, including the leader of the group. Before joining the WDP, she can cultivate land and weave cloth. After joining the programme, she received various kinds of training and observation tours provided by WDP and centre for labour supply, such as:

| Subject                        | Period   | Year | Place                                |
|--------------------------------|----------|------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. family planning             | 15 days  | 2040 | Nepalganj airport                    |
| 2. group saving                | 3 days   | 2040 | Local School                         |
| 3. observation tour            | 1 month  | 2038 | Janakpur, Dhulikhel, Kathmandu, etc. |
| 4. weaving Nepali <i>dhaka</i> | 6 months | 2040 | Bandipur and Seetapur                |

After developing various skills, she purchased a weaving machine provided by the club on installment basis. Since she did not have any independent sources of income before she joined SFDP, she could not benefit from the machine as she lacked money to invest on raw materials. After joining in WDP, it provided raw materials worth of Rs. 500/- as a loan allowing her to begin to weave about 450 meters cloth for one year. She gave her product to ADB to sell, in return she used to get Rs. 15/- per meter and sometimes only Rs 10/- because of the lack of customers. At Rs 15/- per meter she used to earn nearly Rs 700/- per month.

According to Mrs. Thapa, during the year 2038 V.S. SFDP/ADB once misplaced her cloth worth of Rs 350/-, which made it difficult for her to repay the loan. After three years she paid Rs 900/- as the repayment of the loan with interest. But she had her pay taken back for extending the loan. This event saddened her and decreased her interest in providing cloth. Within three years, most of the group members married and engaged in household problem and just like Mrs. Thapa most of the members left the group without repaying the loan. ADB provided the loan on the group responsibility. Since the other group members neglected to repay the loan amount, she also could not get any loan from ADB to continue her activities. The group leader Bishnu Maya Magar was selected as women group organizer (WGO) for the district and left the group. Mrs Motishra, another member of the group, took her post. But she did not show any interest in the group activities and never called meetings. Due to the inactivity of the leader, no one in the group took interest in the activities, and they left the group without repaying their loans to ADB. Now only two members remain (she herself and leader). She reported that her friends' actions and her married life

made her inactive. Because her husband's house does not have enough room to erect the weaving machine, the machine remains in her father's house. Her family is very traditional and conservative. Her father-in-law and family do not like to give her freedom. They think that women should not work independently. The income of male is seen as sufficient for the family expenditure. But the observation and informal and formal interviews with her brother-in-law proves that in practice her family is not so conservative. If they had been conservative, they would not have given her permission to work as a shopkeeper. Our observations indicate that the Magar community is not as conservative as other segments of the village population. Their society is more liberal and free than that of the Newar, Brahman and Chetri communities. Though her family feels that army life is more glorious than that of a farmer, they never interfere in her activities.

As a housewife she totally controls her family earning and manages day-to-day expenditures, but she has to take the advice and permission of her husband or father-in-law to make a large expenditure, for example, she has to take permission from her elder family members to purchase land.

She has been using a traditional *chulo* for cooking, *nanglo* for husking grain, and *nanglo* for drying. However, WDP introduced her to new technologies like smokeless chulo and solar drier, but there such equipments are not available in the village and WDP did not provide these kinds of technological materials for personal use. So she is unable to bring any change in her traditional working patterns.

She got training in family planning which include child care training, health care, balanced diet, drinking water and sanitation, but now she is not using what she learned in her daily life. She usually cooks meals for the family with what she has from her field. She never paid attention to a balance diet. She uses a hand pump for drinking water.

Being a literate person and vice president of the club, she knows about medical treatment, and she has given DPT, BCG, Polio, and other vaccines to her children. In the case of sickness, she goes to an Indian Hospital nearby the boarder for the treatment. Yet she sometimes uses baidyas and jhankries to treat the ill members of her family, as she considers the person is ill by the cause of ghosts and goddesses.

She could save neither individually nor within the group as instructed by WDP. The rule of WDP is that all of the group members must save a minimum of Rs 2/- and maximum of Rs 5/- per month as group saving. But she is not following this instruction.

## **An Unsuccessful Case of Taklung**

**General Introduction of the Site.** One of the evaluation sample sites of SFDP/WDP in the Western Hill region is the Taklung Village Panchayat. This is a dry village situated in the mountain of Gorkha District. The geographical structure of this place makes it difficult to develop a transportation and irrigation system there.

There are a lot of people from various communities. Since the land is not productive most of the youths from the Magar and the Gurung communities are engaged in the Indian Army. The remaining are engaged in husbandry and load carriage.

There are not any transportation facilities. Though the market is near to the district panchayat, there is no good road so it takes a whole day to reach the market. There are no day care centres in the village.

**Case of An Inactive Women Farmer.** Twenty nine years old Mrs. Prem Maya Thapa Magar is living at Dandigoda Village Panchayat, Block No. 3, in Gorkha district. She married at the age of 17 years and has two daughters and one son. The children are 11,  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , and 7 years old respectively. She lives in a joint family. Altogether, there are 6 members in the family: she herself, her 32 years old husband, her three children and her 90 years old father-in-law. The family presents a picture of poverty, with thin, dirty bodies. Her two children are playing in the courtyard, and the youngest baby is crying nearby uncared for.

Her house looks is made of bricks, red clay, and wood with a straw roof. It has only one room on the ground floor. She is using this room as a storeroom, sleeping room, kitchen and dinning room. There are three open places in front and beside the room under the roof, which are called *pindhi*. The front side *pindhi* is using as living room, the right side one is used as bedroom for her father-in-law and the other one as a goat shed. The family has one cattle pond for their bullock in their field. The family does not have their own latrine, and they have to go to their field or at the hill side.

No one in the family is literate. Neither are there any schools nearby nor has she money to educate her children. She often needs her children's help in her household work. That's why she cannot send her children to the school, even though they get free admission at the primary school.

Among six members of the family, only two persons (herself and her husband) can earn. Her family has four kinds of income sources.

**1. Land.** The family has 2 ropanis dry and slope land. It is very difficult to cultivate there. They produce only about 5 muries corn and 2 pathies of

millet in a year. The land produces food for the family that is hardly sufficient for 4 months in a year.

**2. Animal Husbandry.** She or the family do not have their own animals. They keep two goat kids and one buffalo calf, as co-sharers. The animals are not productive at all.

**3. Domestic Industry.** She weaves *gundri* (a kind of mat) and sells them for Rs 6/- per *gundri*. On the average she can produce six mats in a year. She owns a *Hayasho* (Mat weaving machine), but due to alack of raw materials (straw) she can't produce much with it. She is limited to either her own straw or purchased straw to continue her skill. She reported that WDP never provided any kinds of raw materials to her. She has to exchange straw with her labour. She believed that she can produce two times more than now if she could somehow get enough straw.

**4. Labour.** Since her husbandry and domestic industry cannot produce sufficient food for the family, five members in the family have to work on a wage basis. From this source of income she has to meet the whole household expenditure, like expenses on festivals, fuel, treatment, and so forth and provide food for eight months. She and her husband work as porters, and her father-in-law works for neighbours as a cowherd. Her two babies work for the neighbours (retired soldiers) as dish washers.

Though she does not have any individual property, she has complete control over the family property and makes expenditures by herself. She never makes a budget for managing household expenditures, but she reported that last year she spent about Rs 15/- per day on food for the family. Besides this, other expenses are as follows: 1. Rs 200/- for treatment by puja (worship), 2. Rs 124/- for fuel, 3. Rs 1.000/- on festivals.

**Impact of WDP.** In 2040 B.S., one of her friends involved in the WDP told about the programme. She was interested to join in the programme to make benefit to others, but she could not get any friends to organize a group. In 2041 B.S. another four women agreed to make a group and organized group no. 35 under her leadership in the same year.

Before joining the WDP, she could cultivate and weave *gundries*. Immediately after she joined WDP, she received nine days of "bee keeping" training provided by SFDP. But now she does not utilize what she learned in her economic activities, because SFDP did not provide any bees or bee hives,

and also because she has no time to search for bees herself. That is why her training is not useful for her.

In 2041 B.S., WDP provided 2 piglets worth Rs 300/- as a loan at a rate of 18 percent interest. Unfortunately, both piglets died within a month, preventing her from repaying the loan. She could not get any loan from ADB to reinvest to continue her activities. That is why she was unable to help her family in gaining economic status by using her individual income.

The lack of transportation facilities makes it difficult to reach the market. It takes a whole day for marketing. ADB does not provide any marketing facilities. Usually she goes to the market with her husband to sell and buy things.

Before she joined WDP, she worked as a housewife and as a helper to her husband in earning. She has helped her husband in cultivation and animal husbandry, as well as earning some money from working as a porter and selling *gundris*. It seems that WDP was unable to bring any changes in the work patterns.

As a housewife she plays a vital role in day-to-day decisions and manages day-to-day expenditures; but she must obey her husband's decision in a huge amount of the expenditures.

She has been using traditional *agena* (kind of a *chulo*), *nanglo* and *ghatta* (a corn mill) for cooking, husking grain and milling corn respectively. She uses sunlight to dry vegetables, grains and other things. The WDP does not introduce any kinds of new technologies, so she is unable to bring any changes in her traditional working process.

She does not know about balanced diet, and even if she had the knowledge about it, she would be unable to follow it in her daily life because of her poverty. Usually she cooks *dhido* (milleted corn or millet cook in boiled water) for lunch and dinner and popcorn for breakfast. For six months in a year the family members have to be satisfied with *khole* (grits.) There is only one water tap for whole village, provided by government, from which she obtains her drinking water.

She neither knows about hospital and health centres services nor believes in them. In the case of illness, she usually calls the local *jhakris* (priests) for treatment. Since she does not believe on hospital service, she has not given any of the vaccines provided by the SFDP clinic to her children.

Although she could not save individually, she has saved Rs 2/- per month at the ADB for her group saving as instructed by WDP. Last month the group saving fund provided Rs 30/- to treatment of her son as a loan, with a 24 percent interest rate. She cannot repay the loan.

## Analysis

The three cases revealed that WDP could give nothing to the village women. It is able to neither bring any change in their day-to-day lives nor upgrade their economic status. According to these cases, it seems that the women are not inactive themselves, as CWD wants to prove by its evaluation questionnaires. CWD categorized two types of women participants in WDP in a study titled "Inactive Women Farmers in WDP" and "Active Women Farmers in WDP". From my own study, I feel that either these questionnaires were prepared without visiting the field or CWD had already modified them itself to prove that it was the inactiveness of the women farmers which made the programme unsuccessful. CWD did not examine any other causes or the problems which could be responsible for making the project unsuccessful. It appears that CWD did not wish to include such points which might reflect on themselves in the research report.

After studying in four villages, it seems that most of women engaged in the programme are active as well as interested to learn something and become independent by earning individually, as instructed by WDP. They participated in all the training programmes and applied what they learned in their day-to-day life. They used the loans provided by the ADB under WDP in various income generating activities. For example, in Buddhanilkantha village (pre-test site at Kathmandu), most of the women applied their loans to poultry farming and animal husbandry. In Chandra Nagar village (evaluation site of Banke District), most of the women applied their loans to cotton cultivation, animal husbandry, cloth weaving and needlework. In Taklung village (evaluation site of Gorkha District) most of the participants engaged in bee keeping, animal husbandry and *gundri* making (mat made from paddy straw). And in Ananda Ban (evaluation site of Rupandehi District), the participants engaged in animal husbandry as well as weaving dhakees wall hangings and tea mats from *choya* (kind of grass). Successful or not, the groups reported that they worked very hard to get some benefit, but they got little or nothing from their labour.

Most of the women told that they gained nothing for their labour from, except the loan repayment to ADB. Regarding this matter they blamed that lack of market access nearby the village is their main problem, and that the monopoly of the local officials over the programme and irresponsible woman group organizers (WGO) are the main exploiters of their labour. The women seem very conscious about the indirect exploitation policy of project officials. One poultry farming group of Buddhanilkantha village explained that they had been forced by ADB to sell their product to Ratna Feed Industry (RFI) at the cost price, because RFI was supplying their poultry veterinary

services and feed. ADB forced them to sell their chickens to RFI at Rs. 18/- per kg. and /50 paisa per egg respectively, when the market price of chicken is Rs 35/ per kg. and /80 paisa per egg. Otherwise ADB warned that they would stop the service of Ratna Feed Industry. Thus Ratna Feed Industry gained doubly. It got the contract for supply poult and service, and it could buy the women's product at a cheap price. They think that the monopoly of ADB and RFI exploited them.

Mrs. Thapa of Chandra Nagar reported that in the year 2038-39 V.S., ADB misplaced her 450 meters of cloth (for detail see the case of Chandra Nagar), and she was never reimbursed it. This irresponsible action of ADB made it difficult for her to continue her creativity and repay the loan. Most of the cotton cultivators complained that they had been forced to sell their product to the Indian merchants. Otherwise the project officials warned the farmers that they would stop the activities, such as providing loans or sending customers to them. Since there are not any markets nearby, they must accept the ADB's instruction. The same story had been told by the women engaged in the animal husbandry. They must sell the entire product as instructed by the ADB officials. As I observed during the five days observation, there is not a drop of milk in the village for their own use.

As informed by Mrs. Tharu of Ananda Ban, both she and the other member of the group were exploited by the WDP and their irresponsible WGO (for detail, see the case of Ananda Ban). Another women, engaged in another group under WDP, also complained that WGO collected their product (*dhakees*, tea mats and wall hanging) for sale. But she used the beautiful one to present as gift to the observers from Kathmandu, and the rest could not be sold at all. She never paid for their labour, and ADB did not care about the matter. Instead of paying attention in the case, ADB refused to provide any raw materials or loans to continue their activities.

The problem was not that the women were not active at the beginning stage, but that the programmer's monopoly and bad behavior, as well as the local market situation, which was never considered by the organizers or the ADB, discouraged them from reaching their goal.

In the above mentioned villages, CWD choosed some cases as "Active Women Farmer" as indicated by the local chief of the WDP. The local official introduced some so-called active cases, which could repay the loan. Whether the group as a whole benefited or met the goal of WDP or not, it was of no concern to him. The programmers never cared about the implementation and utilization of the training. WDP trained the women in various fields, but it provided neither modern technology, other equipment, nor raw materials to improve their skills and cottage industrial activities. Though WDP provides the material for latrine construction and smokeless



*chulo*, most of the villagers could not use these in their traditional styled households. WDP gave same lectures on health and sanitation in each village, but the women of Kathmandu, Chandra Nagar and Ananda Ban already had this knowledge. So the impact of the programme was minimal. In the case of Taklung village, these kinds of training and lectures could not help Mrs. Thapa Magar, due to her illiteracy and difficult economic situation (see the case of Gorkha District).

It seems that before applying any project, the programmer should examine the general economic situation of the village as well as condition of the women and their capacity to follow lectures. The above mentioned three cases revealed that the participants in WDP were fully conscious about problems of individual income, self support and independence as well as about modern treatment and sanitation. But geographical difficulties and their economic condition did not permit them to apply all these things in their daily life.

Though there are some unsuccessful cases, there are a lot of successful beneficiaries in WDP. WDP's goal of changing the situation of the women is important. WDP could play a significant role in mobilizing the women power for utilizing the local resources in income generating activities. If WDP were to operate fairly, it could bring vital change in the small farmers' condition and uplift their living standard. It would be better to continue by strictly following its aims and objectives to reach its goal.

### **Note**

These case studies are a part of the EVALUATION PROJECT of the WOMEN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UNDER SMALL FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME sponsored by UNICEF & ADB.

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# THE *NEPĀLA-MAHĀTMYA*: A IX-CENTURY TEXT OR A PIOUS FRAUD?

Kamal P. Malla

Of the too numerous testimonies of Nepal's religious history some of the most palpable ones are, perhaps, the textual evidence, particularly the manuscripts. Although Nepal has preserved an unbelievable quantity of manuscripts of Hindu as well as Buddhist persuasions, they are mostly in the form of copies, rather than original contributions to religious thought or critical/exegetical commentaries on the cults practised in Nepal. Most manuscripts of cultural or critical significance were at first brought to the Nepal Valley either by wandering scholars seeking royal patronage or fleeing immigrant men of learning—fleeing mainly from tumultuous events in the neighbouring kingdoms. These manuscripts have, at times, been devotedly worshipped, preserved and labouriously copied and decorated for a millennium by the pious copyists and scribes or by laymen who sought religious merit in getting these sacred texts copied and preserved at places of worship.

Religious texts actually written in Nepal by Nepalese scholars are far and few between. An interesting group of texts are the local *purāṇas* and *mahātmyas* which glorify and aggrandise the local shrines. These texts are modeled on classical Hindu *purāṇas* and *mahātmyas*, and at times transplanted into them as pious fraud, adapting and assembling from several of them. One such text is the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. The Sanskrit text of this *mahātmya* was first published privately from Banaras in 1901 in devanāgarī transliteration by Pandit Muralidhar Jha, based on a Nepalese manuscript in the then Queen's College Library, Banaras. With Jha's text as basis, a Nepali language translation by Mukti Nath Khanal was published in 1968 by the Royal Nepal Academy. In 1970 Uebach published a German translation with Sanskrit text from the National Archives (wrongly numbered Cat. I:1209, following Regmi, II: 836, 1966), giving variant readings from the devanagari copy made for Levi, now deposited in the Institute for Indian Civilization, Paris. In the meantime, Pandit Kedar Nath Sharma has also published a Hindi

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translation based on the Jha edition (Sharma, 1977). Recently, the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* has been published in roman transliteration with an English translation by Jayaraj Acharya (1992). Mr Acharya's roman transliteration as well as English translation is based on Khanal's Nepali edition which in turn is based on the Jha edition of 1901. As Acharya does not seem to have consulted the Banaras manuscript, or for that matter any extant manuscript of the *Mahātmya*, this edition is at the third remove from the original texts.

Mr Acharya has, however, "freely corrected the most obvious grammatical and type errors." It is disquieting though reassuring to know that "the mistakes or corrections did not change much of the meaning of the text" (Preface). Although the Acharya edition is not a critical but a popular one, the liberties he takes with Jha's text or Khanal's text are typical of traditional Sanskritists who are intolerant of "grammatical mistakes", or any deviation(s) from the *sūtras* of Pāṇini. This is a little astonishing, particularly because Acharya, besides being a scholar trained in Sanskrit *Pāṭhaśālā* and *vidyāpīṭha*, is also a qualified linguist trained at home and abroad in the rigours of modern research. The Banaras manuscript or the Levi manuscript may have been inaccessible from Arlington, Virginia, USA--his work station, but it should not have been so difficult for an assiduous student like Acharya to consult at least some of the manuscripts in the National Archives, Kathmandu, where he has several well-placed relatives and friends. In the National Archives there are nearly a dozen *Nepāla-Mahātmya* manuscripts including the much disputed manuscript Cat. I: 984 (Microfilm No. A 332/13). Although Acharya quotes, analyses, emends and disputes the colophon of this manuscript (see Plate I) so passionately, no sensible textual scholar would launch himself on such a hazardous course as Acharya has done here without even consulting his primary sources.

The most controversial part of Mr Acharya's edition of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* is not his "grammatical improvement" on the original, but his 11-page Introduction to the transliteration and translation. For several reasons, no section of this Introduction should go uncontested.

Mr Acharya disputes the interpretation of the colophon of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* (manuscript No I:984 Microfilm No A 332/13) on the basis of its reading and interpretation published by Uebach (1970:12-14). Uebach relied on Petech for her analysis and interpretation of the colophon data, concluding that

śakābde sindhuvājīdharanī ca dharayute

is equivalent to Śaka 1174 or 1177 (*sindhu* = 4 or 7, *vājīn* = 7, *dharanī* = 1, *dhara* = 1) which gives a date equivalent to A.D. 1251 or 1254 November.

However, she confesses that the day of the week (Sunday), the *yoga* (*Sādhya*), and the *nakṣatra* (*ruruśira*?) “cannot be clearly verified” (Uebach, 1970:14). This colophon has since been reexamined by Brinkhaus in his excellent study on the Pradyumna-Prabhāvatī legend in Nepal. His interpretation is based on “metrical considerations” (Brinkhaus 1987:80). Following Petech-Uebach, in his earlier paper on “References to Buddhism in *Nepālamahātmya*” (1980), Brinkhaus had dated the manuscript to A.D. 1251 or 1254. In 1982, during a personal meeting, I disputed this with him on the colophon evidence, which led Brinkhaus to reinterpret the colophon by rendering it this time “comprehensible by means of a metrically and grammatically necessary conjecture” (Brinkhaus, 1987:80). This time he reads it as, *śākābde sindhu vājīdharāṇi (ca) dharāyute*, interpreting the era, not as Śaka Saṃvat, but as Nepāla Saṃvat, which gives him A.D. 1653. Thus Brinkhaus believes that since this is, for him, the earliest dated manuscript of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*, A.D. 1653 October/November is the *terminus ad quen* for the text.

We are referring to Brinkhaus’s “metrically and grammatically necessary conjecture” because Mr Acharya used the *same device*, i.e., metrically unacceptable extra syllable *ca*-hypothesis, without, of course, referring to Brinkhaus either in his Introduction or Bibliography. In his enthusiasm to demonstrate the antiquity of the text, Mr Acharya goes on to claim a hoary antiquity for the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* text, without consulting any of the extant 58 odd manuscripts! Whereas Brinkhaus thought that the year 774 was Nepāla Saṃvat because Śaka also means “a general name for any era”, Mr Acharya interprets the year 774 as Śaka Era, claiming that the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* text is dated A.D. 852 or A.D. 855. The central bone of my contention in this paper is that this is an *impossible* date for *Nepāla-Mahātmya* manuscript because of the following reasons.

The colophon of the manuscript is misinterpreted, not only by Uebach/Petech or by Mr Acharya, but also by Brinkhaus. The era is Śaka but *sindhu* is 7, *vājīn* is 7 too but *dharāṇi ca dharā* is not a one-place numeral 7 or *mountain*, but a chronogram for two-place numeral, *king*, i.e., 16. This gives us the Śaka year 1677, i.e.,  $1677 + 78 = \text{A.D. } 1755$ . (See Sircar, 1965:230-233 for the numerical values of the chronograms). The manuscript in question is an ordinary thick white-paper manuscript written in late Newari script, not a palmleaf written in Bhujinmola or earlier scripts. Of the 58 manuscripts of the *Nepāla mahātmya* microfilmed by the National Archives, Kathmandu, there is no palmleaf nor any written in older Newari scripts. Among the dated ones, the earliest one is a manuscript in *haritāla* paper in the National Archives Cat I:894, Microfilm No A 332/15 with 128 folios, (see Plate II) with the following colophon:

**muni randhrai samudresca yute nepalavatsare bhādraca sitapakse tu  
dvitīyayam ravaudine daivajña cakrasimhena nepala mahima likhetu**

*Muni* = 7, *randhra* = 9, *samudra* = 7, i.e., Nepāla Era 797, equivalent to A.D. 1676 August/September. In a private collection, there is a devanagari transliteration of a manuscript dated N.S. 989, (A.D. 1868), which according to its colophon, is a copy from an earlier manuscript dated Nepāla Saṃvat 790 (A.D. 1669). (See Microfilm No E 718/1)<sup>1</sup>. Thus among 58 extant manuscripts of the *Nepala-Mahātmya* texts there is not a single manuscript dated earlier than the late seventeenth century A.D.

Mr Acharya gives the following five main arguments in favour of dating the *Nepāla Mahātmya* to the mid-9th century A.D.:

1. The text does not mention any post-Licchavi shrines or temples.
2. It mentions shrines and sites where the Licchavi inscriptions are found. There is a high correlation between the two.
3. Licchavi period Saiva-Vaiṣṇava shrines are mentioned in the text.
4. Śaka era is used in the text, an era used mostly by the Licchavi rulers.
5. There is no mention of any ruling king in the colophon, as is usual in the Malla period texts, etc.

The *Nepala-Mahātmya* mentions about 25 Siva *liṅgas*, out of a traditional total of 64 *liṅgas* listed in the popular 19th-century *Bhāṣā Vamśāvalī*s. Of these 25 *liṅgas*, the Maṅgaśvara *liṅga* (VI:66-79), Hanumadisvara (III: 15-20), Somesvara in Suluñco, Bhaktapur (XIII:3-125; XXXVI:7-28) or Tañkeśvara are not Licchavi monuments. None of these *liṅgas* is attested in any Licchavi documents. Although the traditions recorded in the *Nepala-Mahātmya*, particularly concerning some of the well-known *liṅgas*, are at least older than the fourteenth century, the extant text is not older than the mid-seventeenth century. For example, at Kumbheśvara when an already dilapidated temple was built by a Jayabhīma during the rule of Sthitirāja Malla in A.D. 1392, it is recorded in an inscription, first published by Cecil Bendall (1886:83-87), that on this holy spot Kumbha *ṛṣi* had undergone severe penance to please Mahādeva. (Inscription IX, lines 9-11).

The *Nepala-Mahātmya* mentions 25 Siva *liṅgas* but the most important *liṅgas* of the Licchavi period, such as Māneśvara, Vijayaśvara, Anuparameśvara, Ratneśvara, Śūrabhogeśvara, Dakṣiṇeśvara, Laḍṭamaheśvara etc. are not mentioned in the text nor in the *kṣetrapradaḥsinā*, whereas those obscure *liṅgas* mentioned nowhere in the Licchavi epigraphy comprise more than 95% of the *liṅgas* mentioned in the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. Among the *Sakti pīṭhas*, it mentions Harisiddhi,

Vajrayoginī, and Vajravārāhī, none of which is attested in Licchavi inscriptions.

Mr Acharya claims that Śaka era is used by the Licchavi rulers, and as this manuscript is dated in Śaka era it belongs to the Licchavi period. This is an incredible argument in support of the antiquity of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. Mr Acharya might like to consult and scan the corpus of the Shah period inscriptions, *Lāl Mohars*, *Shyāha Mohars*, and the coins to discover for himself how late the Saka era persisted in Nepal. In silver coins, the Śaka era continued until 1911 when Chandra Shumshere officially adopted the era of Vikramaditya. As for the *purāṇa* manuscripts in Nepal dated in the Śaka era, let me arbitrarily list up the 17-19th century texts dated in Śaka era from Part VIII of the *Vṛhatsūcipatram: Purāṇetihāsaṣayakaḥ*) published by the National Archives in 1968: *Uṣacaritam* III: 126, Śaka 1760; *Kurma Purāṇa* V: 5350, Śaka 1697, *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* II: 47, Śaka 1679; *Skanda Purāṇa* V: 5846, Śaka 1697, and *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa* III: 734, Śaka 1761 etc.

Mr Acharya argues that the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* text belongs to the pre-Malla period because, unlike in the Malla-period texts, this manuscript makes no reference to the ruling monarch. This is yet another untenable argument—a naive argument which can only be marshaled by someone who is totally unfamiliar with the Nepalese manuscript-traditions and scribal vagaries. The Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project has by now microfilmed more than one million folios, including some 5000 palmleaf manuscripts in the public as well as private collections, but not all of them have colophons nor do all colophons, whenever there are any, mention the ruling king or the scribe, and that alone does not entitle us to dump these manuscripts to the so-called “Dark Period”, euphemistically called “the Transitional Period” (A.D. 750-1200). Mr Acharya takes the final fatal leap in logic when he writes:

According to Rocher (1986:237) Haraprasad Shastri and Cecil Bendall discovered, in the Durbar Library in Kathmandu, a manuscript of *Skanda-purāṇa* in Gupta Script, and on paleographic grounds, they decided that it was written before 659 A.D.. Given the popularity of *Skanda-purāṇa* in Nepal as early as 659 and the allegiance to *Skanda-purāṇa* claimed by the *Himavatkhaṇḍa* and by *Nepāla-Mahātmya* is evidence not only of the location of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* but also its date.

(Acharya, 1992:7)

The *Skanda Purāṇa* manuscript in question is listed in the National Archives *Catalogue* II: 229 and in Shastri's *Catalogue* Part I (1905:141-146). The manuscript is not dated but Shastri dates it on the basis of paleography, Gupta or later Licchavi script, by comparing it with a Nepalese manuscript, *Parameśvara Tantra*, dated Saṃvat 252. Bendall (1883:xl-xli) thought that the manuscript was dated in Harṣa Era, giving an equivalent of A.D. 858/59. Shastri, therefore, thought that the *Skanda Purāṇa* manuscript was paleographically at least 200 years older; thus it was *believed* to be dated A.D. 659. But unfortunately, Bendall's dating of the *Parameśvara Tantra* itself is questionable as no known manuscript in Nepal uses Harṣa Era, founded by Harṣavardhana in A.D. 606. So the whole of Acharya's argument is vitiated by his youthful zeal to prove the antiquity of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* text by proving the antiquity of *Skanda Purāṇa*. Even the proven antiquity of any *Skanda Purāṇa* manuscript has no relevance whatsoever to the dating of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* for the simple reason that the *Mahātmya* merely "claims" to be a part of the *purāṇa* which, evidently, is not the case. Numerous *khaṇḍas* and *mahātmyas* claim allegiance to the *Skanda Purāṇa* which seems to be "a basket for holding everything that cannot fit elsewhere". In the *Skanda Purāṇa* manuscript referred to by Mr Acharya there is no trace of *Himavat Khaṇḍa*, let alone of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. In fact, as Shastri confesses in dismay

There is no mention of *Khaṇḍas* in any of the colophons of the *Skanda Purāṇa* in the Durbar Library ..... It gradually branched out into so many *Khaṇḍas* and so many *Mahātmyas* .... that scholars thought that the *Skanda Purāṇa* hardly existed except in *Khaṇḍas* and *Mahātmyas*.

(Shastri, 1905: liii)

The whole edifice of Acharya's chronology collapses once we come to face this set of naked textual evidence staring at us. Mr Acharya seems to have rushed into *terra incognita* of secondary or tertiary sources, not fully realising what these sources are arguing about.

The *Nepāla Mahātmya* is not a IX-century text but a late-Malla period pious fraud, concocted by some overenthusiastic pundit who knew bits and pieces of local traditions and bits and pieces of puranic lore. That it is a pious fraud is painfully evident from the wild absence of structural unity in the text. For example, Chapter I on the Origin of the Pasupati *liṅga* and Chapters VIII-XII, dealing with the well-known *Harivaṃśa* legend-cycle of Pradyumna-Prabhāvatī, are almost bodily lifted word for word from the *Paśupati Purāṇa*. The earliest extant manuscript of this *purāṇa* is A.D. 1504 (Yogi Naraharinath, *Sanskrit Sandeśa* I:6, 2010, pp. 13-17: also Risal,

1969: Brinkhaus, 1987 for a detailed analysis of textual relations between these two texts). The absence of structural and thematic unity in the text is nowhere in greater evidence than in the transplantation of the Chapters XVI-XXVI, comprising nearly the one-third of the whole text, dealing with Rāvaṇa (and Laṅkā) who is reported to have observed dreadful penance at Gokaṇṇeśvara (XVI: 79-XXVI: 1). These chapters have more to do with Rāvaṇa or with Laṅkā than with Nepālamandāla or its Śaivism. These chapters read more like *Laṅkā* or *Rāvaṇa-Mahātmya* than *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. Similarly, Chapter XXVI: the Story of Bhṛṅgi and Chapter XXVIII: the Story of Guṇadhya are a meandering and listless narrative whose only Nepalese connection is the so-called origin of the *liṅga* of Bhṛṅgāreśvara, the Bee-Lord incarnate who was Śiva's gate-keeper Bhṛṅgi, fallen out of the Lord's favour and condemned to be born a mortal who became the famous author Guṇadhya.

Chapter XXIX: *Kṣetrapradakṣiṇā* or Circumambulation of the Sacred Places is a kind of hurried resumé that ties up all the loose ends into an instant guide-book for the pious Hindu pilgrim. Perhaps, this is the only section of the text of some interest to modern students of Nepalese religious history, particularly to gain Śaivite perspective on the holy sites of the Nepal Valley. In this guide-book there are two critical points worth noting. Even for the *Śakti pīṭhas* it mentions only Guhyeśvari, Rājaraṅgyeśvari, Vatsalā and Jayavāgeśvari—all in the environs of Paśupati complex. The only other *Śakti pīṭhas* mentioned elsewhere are Caṇḍeśvari of Banepa, Harisiddhi, Vajrayoginī, and Vajravārahi. None of these Śakti cults is known in Licchavi documents.

Following Lévi (1905:205-212) and other scholars following him uncritically, Acharya believes that the "*Nepāla-Mahātmya* puts Śiva, Viṣṇu and Buddha, not only at the same level, but as one and the same" (Acharya, 1992:8). Already more than a decade ago Brinkhaus (1980) has incisively exploded this half-truth about religious syncretism in the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. The text does not put the Buddha at the same level as Śiva or Viṣṇu, let alone consider him as "one and the same". The Buddha is clearly made to play a subordinate role here—subordinate to Śiva-Pārvatī. He is shown practising austerities to please Pārvatī who, pleased with the Buddha, appeared under the name of Vajrayoginī, and instructed the Buddha to erect a *liṅga* (Kāruṇikeśvara) at the confluence of Vāgmatī and Maṇimatī, at Śaṅkhamūla or Sāṅkhū, because the *liṅga* is also known as Maṇilingeśvara (Chapter I:56-67).

In the history of Nepalese Śaivism the cult of *liṅga* has a place of utmost significance. There are some 25 *liṅgas* besides the Paśupati *liṅga*, which belong to the Licchavi period. The original *liṅga* of Paśupati was vandalised



by Shamsud-din Ilyas in November 1349. This desecrated four-faced *liṅga* stood abandoned on the way to Mrigasthali before it was stolen in June 1987! The present phallus was installed by Jaya Simha Rama in 1380. Undoubtedly, the Paśupati complex was already a sacred area by A.D. 533. The finest piece of Śaiva sculpture belonging to the Licchavi period, with distinctly Gupta style and features, now located in a damaged state in Kailash, is dated between A.D. 500-550 by art historians (Pal, 1974:83-86; Bangdel, 1982:53). Among the principal features of the *liṅga* cult in Licchavi period, the most significant appears to be the installation of a Śiva *liṅga* in the name of the living or dead mortals. For example, in A.D. 477, Ratnasangha installed a *liṅga* which he named after himself---Ratneśvara. Some years later, the same donor installed another *liṅga* in the name of Prabhusangha, and called it Prabhukeśvara. Similarly, Jayavarma or Jayalambha installed a *liṅga* and called it Jayaśvara. In A.D. 505, Vijayāvatī, Mānadeva's daughter born of Queen Śrī Bhoginī, installed a *liṅga* in Suryaghata, Paśupati, in commemoration of her deceased father and called it Vijayaśvara. The most brilliant instance of this Śaiva practice is documented in Bhaumagupta's mother, Abhirī Gomini's inscription dated Śaka 462 (A.D. 540). Abhirī Gomini installed a *liṅga* dedicated to the memory of her deceased husband, Anuparam, and called it Anuparemeśvara. For worship and maintenance of this *liṅga* she allocated *guḥi* lands as well. The Paśupati *liṅga* may very well have been founded in the same tradition as all other Licchavi Śiva *liṅgas* by a contemporary historical person with committed temporal or spiritual motive. If the Pāśupata sect of Śaivism was founded by Lakulin about the 2nd century B.C. (Bhandarkar, 1928: 116-117), the sect might have penetrated Nepal only a few centuries later. From Aṃśuvarma (died A.D. 621) who styled himself as *bhagavatpaśupatibhaṭṭārakapādānugrahitō* (favourite of the feet of Lord Paśupati) to Jayadeva II (ca. A.D. 733), the prominent rulers of the Licchavi Nepal were staunch adherents of Śaivism, without being too sectarian in their religious belief and practice. However, none of the *liṅgas* that were installed in the Licchavi period had any divine-miraculous-mythical origin stories attached to them--perhaps, not even the original *liṅga* of Paśupati which has not been dated earlier than the 5th-6th century A.D. on stylistic grounds. On the contrary, everyone of the Licchavi-period *liṅgas* was verifiably installed by contemporary historical personages with unmitigated ulterior motives, as it were. The donor always wished for the well-being of the near and dear living ones (father, mother, relative or the king), for unmixed *punya-vṛiddhi* (earning religious merit), or simply *moksa* (liberation) or *svarga-prapti* (attainment of bliss in heaven) for the deceased relative. The miraculous origin stories of the *liṅgas*, with divine intervention in a mythical context, are much later embellishments. Inspired by strong

influence of Brahminism (See Uebach, 1970), to glorify and aggrandise the holy *liṅgas* and shrines, the local pundits framed up bizarre narratives punctuated with boring dialogues between the benign Hindu gods and the sanguine *ṛsis* who seem to have little else to do than providing puranic legitimacy to the Śiva *liṅgas* in the Nepālamaṇḍala.

The *Nepāla-Mahātmya* also betrays another syndrome of later Brahminic texts in Nepal written in clear reaction against the Buddhist attempts to assimilate the Śaiva *liṅgas* into the cultural jurisdiction of Newar Buddhism. For example, already in the earliest dated text of *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, dated Nepāla Saṃvat 644 (A.D. 1624), deposited at the Asiatic Society Library in Calcutta, there is an attempt to absorb the following eight famous Śiva *liṅgas* into the Buddhist cultural geography: 1. Maṇilingeśvara 2. Gokarneśvara 3. Kileśvara 4. Kumbheśvara 5. Phaṇigarteśvara 6. Phaṇilingeśvara 7. Garteśvara, and 8. **Vikrameśvara**. These palpable Śiva *liṅgas* were analysed and reinterpreted as Eight *Vītarāgas*, the Eight Passionless Beings, by the Buddhist myth-makers of the Nepal Valley. In the later lists of Śiva *liṅgas*, in response to this “cultural imperialism” of the Buddhists, the number 8 is multiplied by 8 to make a total of 64 *liṅgas*, mainly to outdo the Buddhists in their own cultural game, as it were. If the Śaiva scribe in the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* makes the Buddha follow Pārvatī’s instructions and install a Śiva *liṅga* one should not have been surprised at all. That the Newar Buddhists considered Śaivism as the single most powerful rival faith is all too evident from the verses which close a manuscript of the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, edited by Haraprasad Shastri: (1900:500)<sup>2</sup>.

It is against this background that one must place the Śaiva texts such as the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. One should not be astonished at the route of holy circumambulation prescribed in this text. It begins and ends with the shrine of Paśupati, making even the Buddhist shrines such as Vajrayoginī a Śaiva-Śākta shrine, deserving a visit only *en route* to the Paśupati’s temple which becomes the be-all and end-all of the holy man’s existence.

With all his academic credentials in linguistics, Acharya does not even hesitate to recommend the attention of “anthropolgists” to the folk interpretation of the word *Nepāla*, offered in the text of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*, “because this land in the lap of the Himalayas was protected by the Muni Nemi, with pious deeds, it was named *Nepāla*., (literally, protected by Nemi).” (Acharya, 1992:10)

The *Ne-muni* of the *Paśupati Purāṇa* (XXII:1) has undergone a mysterious transformation into *Ne-mi* in the hands of the learned scribe who assembled the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* (XI:61)<sup>3</sup>. The compiler of the *Gopālarājvaṃśāvalī* refers to *Nepa* the cowherd; the compiler of the 19th-century Buddhist *Vaṃśāvalī*, Padmagiri, interprets *Ne* as the Ādi Buddha. Evidently, *Ne-muni*

has all the essential credentials of being a legitimate child of fertile scribal imagination (see Malla 1983b, for the archaeology of the word, *Nepāla*).

Mr Jayaraj Acharya deserves credit for diligently transliterating the Muralidhara Jha-Muktinatha Khanal text into roman. His translation into English may be faithful to the Sanskrit text published by Jha and emended by Acharya, but not incontestable. This is evident from a cursory comparison of his English translation of the crucial Chapter I verses 57-67 with Brinkhaus's translation (1980:276-277). Like his "grammatical improvements" in the original text, Mr Acharya seems also to take editorial liberties to improve upon the religious semantics of this Śaiva text to make it more readable to modern Western readers.

Assuming that Mr Jayaraj Acharya has either time or patience in the thick of his too busy diplomatic assignments to peruse some of the popular 19th-century *Bhāṣā Vamśāvalīs*, composed between ca. the 1830s to the 1880s, he could have effortlessly identified all the Siva *liṅgas* mentioned in the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*, including, of course, the neglected and abandoned Somaliṅga, for which both Mr Acharya and his text lament so eloquently:

Nobody really knows the importance of the Somaliṅga in the Kali Yuga.  
(Preface, page 6 and the text XVI: 33)

Perhaps. But not everyone is *such* an infidel even at this high noon of the Kali Yuga.

#### Notes

१. सं १८९ फल्गुण सु १ रो ६ न्याला बिया चवका कया ध्व सफू श्री श्री दत्तदेवया जुल  
॥ सुनानं लोभ यातसा पंचपातक लाइ ॥ ७९० सालं वकनिम्हया रविरामन चवया तवगु  
सफुली श्वया चोत शुभं ॥

Colophon of a *Nepāla-Mahātmya* manuscript in a private collection dated N.S. 989 (A.D. 1868), being a copy of an earlier manuscript dated N.S. 790 (A.D. 1669). Microfilm No. E 718/1.

२. यदा भविष्ये काले च अत्र नेपालमण्डले ।  
शैवधर्म प्रवर्तते दुर्भिक्षञ्च भविष्यति ॥  
यथा यथा शैवधर्म प्रवर्तते अत्र मण्डले ।  
तथा तथा च अत्यर्थ दुःखपीडा भविष्यति ॥  
बौद्धलोका गणायैर्पि शैवधर्म करिष्यति ।  
ते सर्व्वे कृतपापा(च)च्च नारकञ्च गमिष्यति ॥

*Svayambhū Purāṇa*, edited by Shastri: 1900:500

३. नेनाम्ना मुनिना पूर्व पालनात्पुण्य कर्मणा ।  
अयं हि हिमवत् कुक्षौ नेपाला इति चोच्यते ॥  
*Paśupati Purāṇa*, XXII:1

नेमिना मुनिना यस्मात् पालितं पुण्यकर्मणा ।  
क्षेत्रं हिमवतः कुक्षातो नेपालसंज्ञकम् ॥  
*Nepāla-Mahātmya*, XI:61

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Plate No. I  
The National Archive Cat I : 984, Śaka 1677/AD 1755.

Plate No. II  
The National Archives Cat-I : 894, NS 797/AD 1676.

Plate No. III  
The Microfilm No. E 718/1, NS 989/AD 1868, copied from a manuscript dated NS 790/AD 1669 in the personal collection of Mr Lila Raj Shrestha, Patan.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Mustang Bhot in Fragments*. 1992. Manjushree Thapa. Himal Books, Lalitpur, Nepal. Pages 139. Price: NC Rs. 285.

It is not frequent that one comes across a general non-academic English writing in Nepal, and from a native born at that. Therefore, the publication of "*Mustang Bhot in Fragments*" by Manjushree Thapa is a welcome addition to the volumes on contemporary Nepal. The book is basically an "identity trip" by the author to find an "unsplintered" identity for herself and the broader Nepali society.

Though the work is based on Thapa's two sojourns into Mustang in the aftermath of the political upheavals that wracked Nepal in 1990, it is, nevertheless liberally sprinkled with generalizations and experiences emanating from upper class, *America returned* and developmental credentials.

The author must be given credit for lack of pretensions regarding her work. True to its name, the book is rather fragmentarily presented. The slim volume is arbitrarily apportioned into seven chapters, with considerable white space to spare in and between units. The overall efficiency of the book would have been somewhat enhanced by better organization of the ideas and units.

However, the minor structural defects of the work need not detain us from the main strength of the book which is its ability to raise a number of salient issues discussion. Foremost among these are the questions of identity, cultural change, politics, tourism and development.

Much of the book is the author's own involvement, written in a breezy journalistic first person. After spending nine long years in the United States of America, but still unable to ".... embrace the American dream," she returns to find her destiny in what she terms "... an open, liberal, developing Nepal."

With her convent propriety upbringing, western education and high caste/class pedigree, she naturally lands in the developmental field. It is the arena where the upwardly mobile youths of Nepal carve out their niches and



fortune. So no surprise that she finds herself in the midst of heavy preaching and professing on ecological degradation, gender, caste, class and, of course, *development*. This developmental circle appears "... open and liberal and quick to distance themselves from their feudal culture."

Delving a little further into the multilayered reality, the author rightly discovers that the same champions of democracy and development carry a different facet at another level. Thus, environmentalists turned out to be cynical businessmen, "... social servants swindlers, women's development officers, patriarches." The institutions she finds no better: "... bone corrupt and revolutionary at the same time."

Obviously, the first flowering of the democratic euphoria has worn off. It is an incisive insight into the contemporary social pretensions and middle class mindset. But given the amount of development dollars, foreign trips and international recognition involved, it should come as no surprise. In Nepal it *pays* to wear your democratic, developmental and environmental labels on your forehead.

The barren and rocky landscape of upper Mustang conjures up visions of Santa Fe and the Grand Canyon for the author. While good for comparative perspective transplantation of borrowed visions may distort the ground reality. The first thing in understanding Nepal is to grasp its topo-climatic diversity and not attribute "exotic" flavour to it. As Nepalese, let us leave that for the tourists.

The liberal use of alien terms and categories that do not always relate well with the local context is not limited to the description of the terrain alone. The "Hindu" temple of Muktinath is a place of worship and pilgrimage equally sacred and important for both the so-called "Hindus" and "Buddhists." These absolute and mutually exclusive terms cannot reflect the reality of religion in Nepal as it is a wonderful blending of animism, mysticism and the universal precepts of eastern spiritualism. The total outcome is a *sui generis* entity, immensely richer than any one of the components and uniquely harmonized with the local cosmobiological and geophysical elements.

Muktinath and many other such pilgrimages help integrate diverse linguistic, ethnic and caste groups together on a spiritual and religious level. The etic view that imposes duality where none exists can only distort objective reality. In the long run it carries seeds for mischief if the people themselves adopt the categories tagged on them to generate fissionary tendencies. It is in similar vein that she describes women as "Hinduized"

from their pierced noses and a particular design of blouse they wear. Here too she falls in the trap of employing categories and concepts borrowed from western analytical science, itself based on the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Nose piercing is not a strictly Hindu practice; we see perfectly "Hindu" Newars who do not do it.

It is from this erroneous standpoint that the author laments the subsumption of Buddhism by the all "embracing Hindus." At a time when various spots around the globe have become flashpoints of religious bigotry and when some of the outcome is lapping at our very doorsteps, our religious traditions must be given full credit for seeking to embrace differences rather than to exclude, and accomodate rather than eliminate.

The nature of our indigenous folk religion is such that there are no strict boundaries. Ask village folks what religion they belong to, and the reply will be a look of incomprehension because a structured and church-like religion doesnot exist here. The dichotomy of Hinduism and Buddhism is an alien notion at the popular level. But these labels are being relentlessly imposed upon the people; they are being told: you are Hindu, he is a Buddhist. Similarly with dress, there are no clear-cut territories. Instead, there are continuous gradations of influence, acculturation and physical needs.

Thapa mentions that people in Mustang often get "Hindu" second names such as Rajendra, Surendra or Manju from their school teachers. While this could be true for individual cases, there might be pitfalls in generalizing the phenomenon. We could begin suspecting St. Xavier fathers for the increasing instances of "Christian" names. To a great extent people choose what they think elevating and civilizing.

Not only are the people of Mustang colonized, as the author contends, but liberated intellectuals and academicians condemned to adopt and implant inappropriate foreign categories could also be under a subtle form of subjugation. In her enthusiasm to see the contradictions in Nepali society, the author unnecessarily fragments the issue where fragmentation does not exist. Concepts and categories are not value neutral, those who use them inappropriately run the risk of projecting the underlying premises and prejudices inherent in these categories. It is in similar romantic spirit that Thapa bemoans the people who have gone the way of money in upper Mustang: and whether that "entailed Hinduising or westernising or Nepalising mattered little." Given the reality of upper Mustang as "... farming in the spring, animal husbandry in the summer..." and increasingly wider trade networks and travels, is it not rather wishful to expect the culture to remain pristine, if such a thing ever existed?

Given the vogue that culture is in, the author was bound to take up the cultural issue. The first thing to understand about culture is that it is man's

adaptation mechanism fashioned to suit a particular physical and social environment. A culture will transform both in form and content, if the conditions of subsistence alter. The interplay of ecology, history and economy must be taken into consideration before singing a eulogy on the erosion of romantically exotic cultures.

It would be naive to consider Mustang as sort of a mystical Shangrila and a land that time forgot until the tourists arrived to break the enchanted spell. The "sequestered" image is part of the tourism myth and anthropological romanticism that underplays the fact that Mustang has long been wedded into the global economy and culture before either official "development" or the latter day saviours, the tourists, arrived. Due to economic and demographic factors, Bhotias are more mobile than the *Rongbas* of the mid-hills. The extensive trading links of the northern people in Tibet, Nepal, India and overseas, as well as their distant pilgrimages, attest to this. Each foray out of Mustang brought back bits and pieces of the global cultural traits.

Various writers and apologetics of the northern cultures may have sought to mislead us with the halo of "Tibeto-Burmans" as an egalitarian people, devoid of any class or cultural hierarchy. Sherry Ortner revealed the existence of a complex Khadeu and Khamendeu hierarchy among the Sherpas. Now Thapa has brought to light the Kudak (Bista)/Loba distinctions in fabled Mustang Bhot.

While dealing with the question of cultural decline, the book seeks to link the dilapidated state of some *gompas* (monastery) to the present poverty of the people. But are not awe inspiring religious monuments the result of religious fervour and organization of the community and not wealth alone? Due to developmental and tourism dollars, Kathmandu is incomparably richer than ancient Nepal, but we hardly expect to see another Changu Narayan. So the "deep seated" religiosity of the community in upper Bhot is perhaps not that deep, and poverty certainly should not be the problem if people there can afford designer clothes, silk, satin and videos.

*Mustang Bhot in Fragments* provides an insightful commentary on political wranglings in rural Nepal. The tradition of state politics in Nepal has been one characterized by parochial views and clique loyalties rather than guided by mass - based associational organizations and ideologies. There is "... no room for truth in this system, only for factions that claim to know the truth....," which now, nevertheless, is laced with trappings of modern political rhetoric and ideological pretensions.

External interventions such as developmental programmes and ideology seem to have further deepened the community cleavages in some cases. Instead of enlightening the populace to make rational choices, the practitioners of modern politics seem to be preying upon the vulnerability of

the community, reinforcing "old schisms" and running campaigns filled with "rhetoric, lies and impossible promises."

Whatever the extent of internal schisms, the recent democratic movement has certainly made it fashionable to raise strident calls of separateness and aloofness from the mainstream along ethnic and linguistic lines. But the innate strength and harmony of our traditions must be credited for preventing these divisive tendencies from disrupting day to day community life.

Thapa intelligently sought to interlink the issue of development with the nature of community politics and local leadership. Indeed, local development works, especially the variety requiring community participation and involvement, cannot hope for any degree of success unless they are based on proper understandings of community relationships and the nature of local leadership. The community operated hydel projects in Jharkot and Purang are a success due to the vitality of leaders, fewer distinctions within the community and the ability of these communities to use the electricity for income generating purposes like tourist lodges. On the other hand, similar schemes in upper Mustang are plagued by mutual suspicion, jealousy and non-cooperation. The communities are too fragmented on Bista/Loba lines, the traditional leaders have lost credibility, and there seems to be no monetary use for *bijuli* at present. As one villager puts it in exasperation, "Whatever you do, don't involve us. We can't trust each other."

The author succinctly records the pitfalls of current rhetoric on participation and voluntary labour. The small hydel project in Charang extracted equal amounts of monetary contribution (Rs. 500 and one wooden pole) and labour input (a months voluntary labour) from each household. But when it came to sharing the benefits, some would be plugging in twenty-six bulbs, stoves and VCRs, while many would be hard pressed to afford one bulb. No wonder the peasants get sceptical and think of "participation" as another scheme to exploit them. The development pundits, on the other hand, get perplexed that their visions of blissful pastoral cooperation find no ready takers among the ignorant laity.

Mustang has been touted as the last touristic frontier in Nepal and the question of its "opening" or restriction was a matter of controversy in the industry and environment circles for quite a while. Upper Mustang was finally opened, and the book has done an excellent job in exposing the various interests behind the decision. In rather condescending terms, the "low-scale highcost" tourism was officially deemed suitable in the culturally and ecologically "fragile" region in the local people's interest. Furthermore, the government, voicing the industry's line, argued that this version of elite tourism was the only viable option available for the uplift of the area and the people.

Through its US \$500 entry fee and organized group tour requirements for Mustang, the government played into the hands of a few powerful interests within the tourism industry. These exclusiveist regulations meant small and local operators of the area could not partake in the tourism dollars. To the local Mustangis' feeble claims that a certain portion of the operations in the area be reserved for them, the official retort reads something like: "If you run tourism here, you will ruin your culture and environment, we know how to run it best for you; and as for benefit sharing, you can become porters," that is, "if we decide not to bring them from Kathmandu." So despite democratic credentials, the government still choose to play "god" and hand top-down decisions.

Given the obviously low tourism dollar retention rate (as low as fifteen cents per dollar) for Mustang, it is yet to be seen how the much heralded high-cost, high-altitude tourism will benefit the local economy, despite its people and environment friendly labels. One is tempted to hope for the sake of the people that tourism is prevented from becoming a sort of a rough and ready justice: all cultural and environmental burdens on the locals, and profits to the operators.

In a sense Mustang's mystical halo will be its own undoing as far as "preserving culture" is concerned. No matter what kind of tourism is introduced into the area, it cannot be totally insulated from the local cultural processes because people and cultures are not inert entities. But that's a normal cost of doing business, as far as the operators are concerned. Given the inevitability of Mustang's cultural and ecological transformation due to tourism and other contemporary processes, some justice would still be served if the *lobas* could make something out of the deal. Otherwise, it might, as the Magars say, be "*Eei lang bhrasta, woo lang Bhrasta*" for the Manangis.

At the end the author comes close to what she was in search of: identity and self. Her position of "first world possibilities in a third world society" is not a produce of her efforts alone but also to a great extent the result of generations of accumulated privileges and power that is "... borne by impoverished, disempowered suffering Nepalis." This is a critical statement on the working of the rigid stratification system in Nepal and how it determines people's life chances. To a large extent being born in the "right" place is what counts.

But the seeker of self must be content with partial illumination because "living this schismed identity is what it mean to be like a Nepali." Maybe the *Lobas* of this country deal with the identity crisis better, except for the worries of *Tasampa* and mundanities, they don't seem to be raked by the perennially confounding.

At another level, however, the question of identity is a problem for the whole new generation that is restless and aspires out of the rural context: from Kagbeni's lodge owner who despises his *dhindo* and dreams of the "good life" in India, or Norbu Nepali, an unabashed champion of Thak, who in his inner self desperately desires *bidesh*. But in a sense, don't we all? Depending upon our skills, education and connections, the land of our heart's desire lies elsewhere, whether it be India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan or the western shores. The glorified *Lahoure* tradition is alive at every level of society - in varying degrees, various forms. Otherwise, why would we communicate about Nepal in foreign tongues in Nepal? The lingua franca or any other local dialects are considered incapable for higher expressions, thus unviable for development and academics. We may be talking about Nepal, but we are not talking to Nepal and Nepalis; our significant audience lies elsewhere. It is ironic that even in this outward flight, the ablest get the farthest out.

It is always tempting to fragment the issues and portray the reality in isolation for conceptual as well as analytical convenience. But the Nepalese situation, instead of coming in a black and white dichotomy, is often a subtle continuum of organic gradations. This holistic realization would perhaps lead to better appreciation of the various issues involved in the questions of development/underdevelopment, politics, culture and identity.

– Saubhagya Shah

## Notes to Contributors

Manuscripts should be typed double-space on A4 paper with a 4 cm margin on all four sides. The top copy should be submitted and photo/carbon copy retained by the author. The author should underline nothing except words which are to be italicised. Notes and references should be typed double-spaced on separate pages and will be included at the end of the article. The text should refer to notes numbered consecutively throughout the article, using raised numbers; bibliographical references should be cited in the text by the author's last name, date of publication, and page number, e.g., (Bista 1965:105) or if the author's name is mentioned in the text, by the date and page reference only, (1965:105). Entries in the references should be in alphabetical and chronological order of authors. They should include the details in the following order: name of the author (s)—surname first, date, title, name of the periodical, volume number (Arabic numerals to be used throughout), pagination (for articles in periodicals and books with several authors), place of publication (and name of the publisher for a book). Examples of the style to be used are as follows:

Bista, D.B. 1965. *People of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar

Dhungel, Basundhara. 1980. "The Newars." In Sudha Paneru (ed.), *Traditional and Prevailing Child-Rearing Practices Among Different Communities in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan university, pp. 31-53

Shrestha, Ananda. 1979. "Error Analysis." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 6:2, pp. 1-9.

Shrestha, Ramesh. 1977. "Adult Literacy in Nepal: a Report." Kathmandu: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University. Mimeographed.

Stone, Linda. 1977. "Illness, Hierarchy and Food Symbolism Hindu Nepal." Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis. Brown University.

Tables should be submitted on separate pages, numbered and with headings. Maps and text figures should be drawn in black waterproof ink about twice the intended final size, with lettering in soft pencil. Notations in the text should indicate where these are to appear. Plates should not be less than intended final size. They should be printed on glossy paper. They should be titled and numbered.